CHARLESTON BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP

The Life and Teachings of The Buddha

According to the oldest texts

Compiled from various sources by

Allan R. Bomhard

Study Guide and Reference Manual

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CHARLESTON BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP
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The doctrinal positions expressed in this book are based upon the original teachings (*aggavāda*) of the Buddha.

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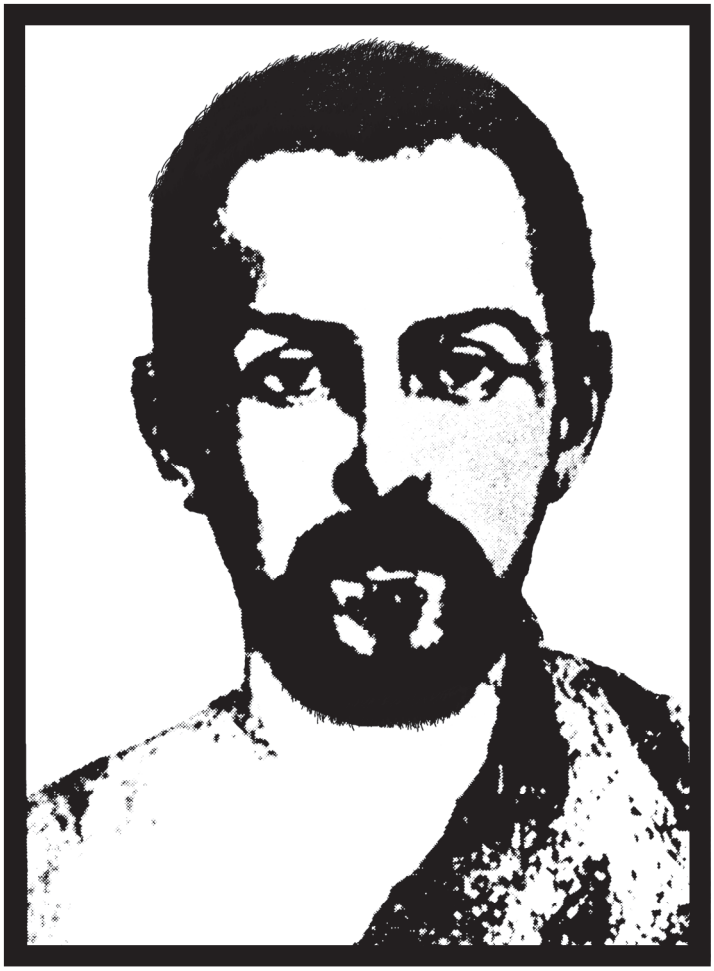
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa.
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa.
Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā-sambuddhassa.



THE BUDDHA, THE ENLIGHTENED ONE.

This image, which is based upon ancient Indian oral and visual tradition, is thought best to represent the *Buddha* as He actually appeared.

Source: John Stevens, *Lust for Enlightenment: Buddhism and Sex* (Boston, MA, and London: Shambhala Publications [1990], p. 14).

Preface

This work started out as a revision of the 4th edition (1988) of *The Buddha and His Teachings* by Nārada Mahāthera (1898—1983). However, so many changes have been made and so much new material has been added that it has virtually become a new book. Indeed, it has more than doubled in size from the original. Consequently, the title has been changed to *The Life and Teachings of the Buddha, according to the oldest texts*, and Venerable Nārada Mahāthera is no longer listed as the author.

In preparing this work, my objective has been to pass on existing spiritual truths rather than to create a new work *ex nihilo*. In so doing, I have intentionally sought out published material of exceptional value either to use as a foundation for new chapters or to incorporate into the chapters written by Nārada Mahāthera. These sources are listed in the footnotes and in the selections for further reading at the end of individual chapters.

The purpose of this book is to provide a comprehensive, reliable, clear, well-arranged guide to the life and teachings of the *Buddha*, as preserved in the Pāḷi scriptures of Theravādin Buddhism. These scriptures are the most authentic record of these teachings that have come down to us, inasmuch as they come directly from the *Buddha* Himself or from His direct disciples. They provide both the clearest account of the *Buddha's* true teachings and a valuable record of the early history of Buddhism.

Beliefs and practices which were not part of the earliest form of Buddhism but which arose at later dates have been purposely excluded from this book, or, if they are discussed at all, are identified as later developments. An attempt has also been made to separate fact from fiction by stripping away the many legendary tales that have inevitably grown around the birth, life, and person of the *Buddha*. On the other hand, the cultural environment in which the *Buddha* lived and taught is so entwined with the conceptual, ethical, and philosophical dimensions of early Buddhist literature that it would be foolish to ignore it. Indeed, including the cultural elements serves to enhance our appreciation of the challenges faced by the *Buddha* in spreading His teachings. Though the cultural environment has changed dramatically over the centuries since the time of the *Buddha*, the challenges of spreading the *Dhamma* in contemporary society are no less formidable. That said, the universality of the *Buddha's* message is timeless and transcends cultures.

Throughout the book, the original Pāḷi terms are given for key doctrinal concepts. However, when discussing other schools of Buddhism in which Sanskrit is used as the liturgical language, the appropriate Sanskrit terms are given instead.

It is important to bear in mind that the *Buddha* had very clear ideas about which questions His teachings were meant to answer and which ones they were not. He repeatedly emphasized that His teachings concerned suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. He intentionally refused to answer metaphysical questions that were not relevant to those objectives.

Unfortunately, after His death, all of the metaphysical speculations, forms of worship, rites and rituals, and superstitious beliefs that the *Buddha* had fought so hard to dispel and to protect His teachings against came rushing into it. Eventually, a totally new doctrinal system came into being — the so-called "Mahāyāna".

Fortunately, thanks to the meticulous care with which the original teachings were preserved by generations of Theravādin scholar-monks, those teachings are still available for all to appreciate in their pristine magnificence. As will be seen in what follows, those teachings are empirical, scientific, pragmatic, therapeutic, psychological, egalitarian, and individualistic. They expound a unique and effective path to enlightenment.

I would like to thank Ashin Sarana for pointing out a number of typographical and other errors and for making suggestions for improving the book. ■

Allan R. Bomhard

The practice of mindfulness (*sati*), of nonjudgmental awareness, lies at the heart of the Buddhist path. Mindfulness is not a mystical state but a mundane act that everyone can and should do in every moment.

> *Everything is meditation in this practice, even while eating, drinking, dressing, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking. Whatever you are doing, everything should be done mindfully, dynamically, with totality, completeness, thoroughness. Then it becomes meditation, meaningful, purposeful. It is not thinking, but experiencing from moment to moment, living from moment to moment, without clinging, without condemning, without judging, without evaluating, without comparing, without selecting, without criticizing — choiceless awareness.*
>
> *Meditation is not only sitting; it is a way of living. It should be integrated with our whole life. It is actually an education in how to see, how to hear, how to smell, how to eat, how to drink, how to walk with full awareness. To develop mindfulness is the most important factor in the process of awakening.*
>
> Munindra (1915—2003)

Further Reading

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The Pāḷi Language

Overview of the Pāḷi Language

"Pāḷi" is the name given to the language in which the oldest Buddhist scriptures are written. The word *pāḷi* means "text", as distinguished from "commentary" and is traditionally used as the name for Māgadhī, the dialect of Magadha, which was, no doubt, the actual dialect spoken by the *Buddha*. Most modern scholars think that Pāḷi was a western Prakrit dialect, slightly different from Māgadhī. In any case, Pāḷi is but one of the Prakrit dialects which had developed in northern India between 1000—600 BCE from Sanskrit. Pāḷi is the only one of those spoken dialects for which we have full and such early records, and it bears about the same relationship to Classical Sanskrit that modern Italian does to Latin.

We have records of other Prakrit dialects from about the sixth century CE, and the Jain Prakrit, in which the sacred books of the Jains were composed still later, is closely related to it. But the inscriptions of Asoka, the famous King of Magadha, in the middle of the third century BCE, come the closest to Pāḷi of all the existing linguistic documents of ancient India.

Down to the fifth century CE, the texts were handed down in Śri Lanka in Pāḷi and the commentaries in Sinhalese, the spoken language of Śri Lanka. During that century, the commentaries were retranslated into Pāḷi and now exist only in that language. The Pāḷi of these early commentators differs from that of the canonical texts in the same way that the Latin of Augustine differs from the Latin of Vergil and Cicero.

From the twelfth century CE onward, there have been a number of works composed from time to time in Śri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), and Thailand in a form of Pāḷi which differs from the two previous stages in much the same way as the Latin of the medieval theologians and chroniclers differs from the Latin of Augustine and of Cicero. In this third and last stage of Pāḷi, a large number of words are introduced which are merely retranslations of Sanskrit, Burmese, Thai, or Sinhalese expressions, and the idiomatic phraseology of the sentences is often a reproduction of the idiom in which the authors were accustomed to speak in everyday life.

Of these three stages, the pure Pāḷi, or language of the canonical texts, though considerably older in time than the majority of books written in Classical Sanskrit, is considerably younger in form. The changes shown in it as compared with Sanskrit may be likened to the changes which have produced the modern Romance languages out of Latin and may be summarized as follows:

1. Every word has to end either in a vowel or in a vowel followed by nasalization (written *ṁ* and pronounced like the *ng* in English *sing*).
2. The clusters of consonants which are so characteristic of Sanskrit are softened down by assimilation, elision, or contraction, or are avoided by the insertion of vowels.

3. The sound *ṛ* has completely disappeared, the diphthongs *ai* and *au* are replaced by the vowels *e* and *o*, and the three *s*-sounds (*ś*, *ṣ*, and *s*) are all represented by simple *s*.
4. The rules of *sandhi*, that is, the combining of adjacent sounds, are greatly simplified, so that the words retain very much of their original form, and *sandhi* becomes in Pāḷi little more than a set of rules for the elision of vowels in a simple, natural way.
5. The rules of declension of nouns and the conjugation of verbs are much simplified, not only by the actions of the preceding principles, but also by the loss of the dual number and by other similar alterations.

Due to these factors, Pāḷi, like Italian, has become a language at once flowing, melodious, and sonorous, and an examination of its grammar and vocabulary reveals all the distinctive characteristics of a vigorous, spoken, and growing vernacular, as opposed to the formality and stiffness of a dead language. There are, as in Sanskrit, a few imported words, such as *chāṭi* and *chumbaṭa*, borrowed from Dravidian or other sources. These few exceptions notwithstanding, the whole of the word-forms in Pāḷi are derived directly, like Classical Sanskrit, from the older language that was spoken by the Indo-Aryan conquerors of India. In about a score of instances, Pāḷi has preserved word-forms peculiar to the older language and lost in Classical Sanskrit, and it has preserved the Vedic *ḷ*. In a few cases, it even has distinct traces of the still older language of which Sanskrit and the other Indo-Aryan languages are descendants.

About two-fifths of the words in Pāḷi are identical with their Sanskrit equivalents. There is another class, also comprising about two-fifths of the Pāḷi vocabulary, in which the change is so slight as to be easily recognizable. Thus, Sanskrit *mukta* 'free' becomes Pāḷi *mutta*; *kleṣa* 'mental defilement' becomes *kilesa*; *karma* 'volitional action' becomes *kamma*; *ambā* 'mother' becomes *ammā*; *agni* 'fire' becomes *aggi*; etc. Finally, there is a third class, which looms largest in the works on Pāḷi philology, but is really quite small in comparison with the other two classes, which contains those words in which the change is not so evident, such as Sanskrit *mleccha* 'foreigner' versus Pāḷi *milakkha*; *jyautsna* 'clear' versus *dosina*; *upādikā* 'ant' versus *upacikā*; *yantragṛha* 'bathroom' versus *jantaggha*; etc.

Overview of Pāḷi Literature

Pāḷi literature consists of the sacred texts of Theravādin Buddhism, as well as other works by Buddhist authors, including histories, poetry, legends, commentaries, books on ethics, and controversial volumes on the rules of the Buddhist monastic order. Its volume is constantly being increased, for the Pāḷi language has become the *lingua franca* of the Buddhists of Southeast Asia and is still used by authors who wish to be read not only in their native country but by Buddhists in other countries in which Theravādin Buddhism prevails.

The Pāḷi books containing the sacred texts are divided into three collections called the *piṭakas* or "baskets".

The first division contains the disciplinary rules for Buddhist Monks and Nuns. This division is known as the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

The second division is the most important for the proper understanding of the ethical and doctrinal teachings of the *Buddha* Himself and of the early Buddhists. This division contains a collection of discourses in which, usually the *Buddha* Himself, but occasionally also one of His chief disciples, sets forth some fundamental point of His teachings. These discourses are arranged in several collections, known collectively as the *Sutta Piṭaka*. They occupy in the history of Indian thought a position similar to that occupied in the history of Greek thought by the *Dialogues* of Plato. Compared to the works of Plato, the thought is more original, especially as being free from the ancient soul-theory. They are also much more systematized and worked out. The first two collections — the Long Discourses (*Dīgha Nikāya*) and the Middle-Length Discourses (*Majjhima Nikāya*) — were evidently put together at the same time, probably in the fifth century BCE, and by the same hands, and are, in reality, one book.

In the first two collections of discourses, the essential points of doctrine are all discussed, but each discourse deals, for the most part, with some particular point only, and related points typically occur in other discourses widely separated in the collection. This means that the various discourses have to be pieced together before one can arrive at a full understanding of the doctrine. The task of bringing together these discourses was already undertaken in a rather loose manner by the early Buddhists. First, they prepared a collection called the "Collected Discourses" (*Saṁyutta Nikāya*), in which the various utterances ascribed to the *Buddha* were grouped according to particular subjects or particular persons being addressed. Next, there is a collection called the "Numerical Discourses" (*Anguttara Nikāya*), in which the sayings are arranged in groups consisting of one, two, three, four, and so on up to twenty or thirty particular details.

The last collection (the *Khuddaka Nikāya*) consists of a number of shorter works of various dates and various contents.

All of the discourses in the *Sutta Piṭaka* deal, in one way or another, with ethical and intellectual training. This was necessarily based on a highly sophisticated view of psychology, one of the most interesting and important contributions of Buddhism to human thought, which is constantly referred to and frequently discussed in scattered passages in these discourses. These passages were collected and systematized in a series of works which form the third and last of the three great divisions of the *piṭakas*, the division called the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, the "Higher Teachings". The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* includes the following seven books: (1) *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*; (2) *Vibhanga*; (3) *Dhātukathā*; (4) *Puggalapaññati*; (5) *Kathāvathu*; (6) *Yamaka*; and (7) *Paṭṭhāna*.

In addition to these texts, there is a huge amount of commentarial and subcommentarial literature as well as many non-canonical works, including anthologies, cosmological texts, poetry, stories, chronicles, and letters and inscriptions composed in Pāḷi. Among these are famous works such as the *Dīpavaṁsa* (*Chronicle of the Island* [of Śri Lanka]), the *Mahāvaṁsa* (*Great Chronicle* [also of Śri Lanka]), the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* (*A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*), the *Visuddhimagga* (*The Path of Purification*), the *Milindapañha* (*Milinda's Questions*), etc.

A Guide to Pāḷi Pronunciation

The Pāḷi alphabet contains forty-one letters. These are divided into eight vowels, thirty-two consonants, and one nasal sound (written *ṁ*) called *niggahīta*. The letters are classified into the categories represented in the following chart:

Vowels:	a	i	u	e	o
	ā	ī	ū		
Gutturals:	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ
Palatals:	c	ch	j	jh	ñ
Retroflexes:	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ
Dentals:	t	th	d	dh	n
Labials:	p	ph	b	bh	m
Semivowels:	y	r	ḷ	l	v
Sibilant:	s				
Spirant:	h				
Nasal (*niggahīta*):	ṁ				

The gutturals are formed in the throat, the palatals with the tongue placed against the front palate, the retroflexes with the tip of the tongue turned up to touch the back of the palate, the dentals with the tip of the tongue against the teeth, and the labials with the lips. Among the semivowels, *ḷ* is retroflex, and *l* is dental.

Among the consonants, *k*, *g*, *c*, *j*, *ṭ*, *ḍ*, *t*, *d*, *p*, and *b* are unaspirated; *kh*, *gh*, *ch*, *jh*, *ṭh*, *ḍh*, *th*, *dh*, *ph*, and *bh* are aspirated; and *ṅ*, *ñ*, *ṇ*, *n*, and *m* are nasals. The aspirates are single letters. They are pronounced like their unaspirated counterparts except that a slightly forceful puff of breath is added to them.

The individual letters are pronounced approximately as follows:

Vowels:

a	=	a	in	*sof***a**
		u	in	*r***u***n*
ā	=	a	in	*f***a***ther*
i	=	i	in	*p***i***n*
ī	=	ee	in	*f***ee***t*
u	=	u	in	*p***u***t*
ū	=	oo	in	*b***oo***t*
		u	in	*r***u***de*
e	=	a	in	*m***a***ke*
		ei	in	***ei****ght*
o	=	o	in	*h***o***le*

Consonants:

k	=	c	in	**c***ar*;	
		k	in	**k***ennel*;	
		q	in	*Ira***q**	
g	=	g	in	**g***one*	
ṅ	=	ng	in	*si***ng**	
c	=	ch	in	**ch***ild*	
j	=	j	in	**j***oy*;	
		g	in	**g***esture*	
ñ	=	ny	in	*ca***ny***on*	
t	=	t	in	*s***t***op*	
d	=	d	in	**d***og*	
n	=	n	in	**n***ot*	
p	=	p	in	*s***p***in*	
b	=	b	in	**b***at*	
m	=	m	in	**m***other*	
y	=	y	in	**y***es*	
r	=	r	in	**r***ain*	
l	=	l	in	**l***eg*	
v	=	v	in	**v***ine*	(when not preceded by a consonant)
v	=	w	in	**w***ick*	(when preceded by a consonant)
s	=	s	in	**s***un*	
h	=	h	in	**h***ot*	
ṁ	=	ng	in	*thi***ng**	(according to Śri Lankan pronunciation)

It must be stressed that Pāḷi *th* (or *ṭh*) is never pronounced like English *th* in *that*, *thin*, etc. It is merely an aspirated *t* (or *ṭ*), as in English *ho***th***ouse*. Pāḷi *ph*, too, is pronounced as an aspirated *p*, as in English *loo***ph***ole*, not like English *ph* in *philosophy*, while *kh* is pronounced like *kh* in English *bul***kh***ead*. The same applies to *dh* (or *ḍh*), which is pronounced like English *dh* in *bloo***dh***ound*, to *bh*, which is pronounced like English *bh* in *a***bh***or*, and to *gh*, which is pronounced like English *gh* in *do***gh***ouse*. Double consonants must be strictly pronounced as such, like the double *nn* in English *u***nn***ecessary*. ■

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PART ONE

The Life of the Buddha

1

The Buddha: From Birth to Renunciation

"Monks, there is a unique Being, an extraordinary person, who has appeared in the world for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of celestial beings (devas) and humans. Who is that unique Being? It is the Tathāgata, the Exalted, Fully Enlightened One. This, indeed, is that unique Being.

"Monks, there is a Being who has appeared in the world who is the only one of His kind, without a peer, without a counterpart, incomparable, unequalled, matchless, unrivalled — the best of humans. Who is that unique Being? It is the Tathāgata, the Exalted, Fully Enlightened One. This, indeed, is that unique Being.

"Monks, the manifestation of a unique Being is the manifestation of great vision, of great light, of great radiance; it is the manifestation of the six things unsurpassed;[1] *the realization of the four analytical knowledges;*[2] *the penetration of the various elements, of the diversity of elements; it is the realization of the fruit of knowledge and liberation; the realization of the fruits of Stream-Entry, of Once-Returning, of Non-Returning, and of Arahatship.*[3] *Who is that unique Being? It is the*

---

[1] The "six things unsurpassed" (*cha anuttariyā*) are explained in the *Anguttara Nikāya* 6:130: (1) the unsurpassed sight (that is, the sight of a *Buddha* or His disciples); (2) the unsurpassed hearing (that is, the hearing of the *Dhamma* from a *Buddha* or His disciples); (3) the unsurpassed gain (that is, the gain of faith in a *Buddha* or His disciples); (4) the unsurpassed training (that is, the training in the higher morality, the higher mind, and the higher wisdom as taught by a *Buddha* and His disciples); (5) the unsurpassed service (that is, service to a *Buddha* or His disciples); and (6) the unsurpassed recollection (that is, the recollection of a *Buddha* or His disciples).

[2] The "four analytical knowledges" (*catasso paṭisambhidā*) are the analytical knowledges of meaning, doctrine, language, and ingenuity.

[3] The "fruits (*phala*) of stream-entry", etc. may be explained as follows: Between the states of delusion, bondage, and suffering and that of complete liberation (*vimokkha*) lie the paths and fruits of attainment, marked by the progressive elimination of ten fetters (*saṁyojana*). One who has put an end to the first three fetters is known as a Stream-Winner (*Sotāpanna*). When, in addition, the next two fetters are weakened, one becomes a Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmī*). When all of the first five fetters, which are known as the grosser fetters, are completely destroyed, one becomes a Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*). When all ten fetters are destroyed, one attains the state of *Arahat*.

Tathāgata, the Exalted, Fully Enlightened One. This, indeed, is that unique Being."[4]

Introduction[5]

History has produced many great figures, but none, in this present cycle of time, as impressive and memorable as Siddhattha Gotama, the Sākyan prince who became the world's greatest spiritual guide. He was unique as a personality and unique as a teacher. There were countless Enlightened Ones before Him, and there will be more, so long as cyclic existence (*saṁsāra*) endures, but He is the only one of whom we have actual historical knowledge, and His life has been a source of wonder and inspiration for more than 2,600 years. It continues to be so to this day.

Every Buddhist is familiar with the miraculous stories connected with Prince Siddhattha's birth, early manhood, and later life as the *Buddha*. The traditional tales handed down from generation to generation of Buddhists are full of marvels, some of which are difficult for the modern mind to accept as literally true. In this, Buddhism is no different from other creeds. All of them have their mythological accretions — the legends that time and the devotion of the faithful have woven about the lives of their founders. But, whereas in most other religions, the supernatural events are an essential part of the faith, to be held as proof that the founder was a divine personage, an incarnation of God, or a prophet specially singled out to be God's spokesman on earth, in Buddhism, they have no importance whatsoever, because the *Buddha* did not claim to be any of these things. If one so chooses, the stories may be taken literally, or they may be regarded as fiction. The uniqueness of the *Buddha* does not rest upon miracles or myths, but upon the established, unembellished facts of His life, and, above all, on the realizable truth of His Teaching.

The unembellished facts of His life alone are more than enough to move us to awe and veneration. They confront us with something outside normal experience, a challenge to the world's accepted values and to some of its most cherished goals.

The world of the time in which Prince Siddhattha lived was not so different from our own. Then, as today, men were inclined to worship power; they strove for wealth and position, reveled in luxury when they could, and lamented their poverty when they could not. They loved and hated, they quarreled and cheated, they were cowards at times and heroes at others, they were mean and noble by turns, just as they are now. They placed great value on the pleasures of the senses and did their best to ignore the tragedies

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[4] *Anguttara Nikāya*, part I, XIII, 1, 5, 6; I 22—23; Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2005]), p. 51.

[5] This section, along with other parts of this chapter, are adapted from "The Buddha — A Unique Teacher," included in *Dimensions of Buddhist Thought: Collected Essays* by Francis Story (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1985]), pp. 3—12. Parts are also adapted from Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pāḷi Canon* (Seattle, WA: PBS Pariyatti Editions [3rd ed. 1992]) and from H[ammalawa] Saddhatissa, *The Life of the Buddha* (London, Boston, MA, and Sydney: Unwin Paperbacks [1976]).

around them, turning a blind eye to sickness and pain, and, above all, trying to forget that death awaits us all — the rich and the powerful, the poor and the downtrodden, and ordinary men and women alike.

Birth

In the sixth century BCE, in the foothills of the Himalayas, near the present-day border between India and Nepal, there was a small but prosperous kingdom ruled by an aristocratic clan known as the Sākya. The capital of the Sākya kingdom was called Kapilavatthu,[6] and the surrounding land was thickly dotted with smaller towns and villages. To the south of this kingdom lay the country of Kosala and, beyond that, the kingdom of Magadha. To the east lay the land of Koliya.

Ten lunar months after conception, the queen and her retinue left Kapilavatthu to visit her parents in Koliya. On the way, she passed through Lumbinī,[7] a park that was owned jointly by the people of both lands. There, she gave birth to a noble prince in a curtained enclosure in the park on the full-moon day of May[8] in the year 623 BCE.[9] The purported site of His birth, now called Rummindei, lies within the territory of Nepal. This newly born child was destined to become the greatest religious teacher the world had ever seen.

His father[10] was King Suddhodana[11], and His mother was Queen Mahā Māyā. Inasmuch as the beloved mother died seven days after His birth, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī,[12] her younger sister, who was also married to the King, raised the prince, entrusting her own son, Nanda, to the care of nurses.

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[6] The site of Kapilavatthu (Sanskrit *Kapilavastu*) has been identified with Bhuila (Bhulya) in the Basti district, three miles from the Bengal and N. W. Railway station of Babuan.

[7] A pillar, erected at this sacred spot by King Asoka to commemorate the event, still stands to this day.

[8] Corresponding to Pāḷi *Vesākha* (Sanskrit *Vaisākha*) and Sinhalese *Vesak*.

[9] Unlike the Christian Era, the Buddhist Era is reckoned from the death of the *Buddha*, which occurred in 543 BCE (in His 80th year), and not from His birth. It should be noted that opinions differ on the exact date of the birth of the *Buddha*. The date given here is from Nārada Mahāthera, *The Buddha and His Teachings* (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society [fourth edition, 1988]), p. 1. H[ammalawa] Saddhatissa, *The Life of the Buddha* (London, Boston, MA, and Sydney: Unwin Paperbacks [1976]), p. 13, gives the date as 560 BCE. The consensus is that the *Buddha* lived in northern India sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE (cf. the article on the life of the *Buddha* in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*).

[10] Gotama (Sanskrit *Gautama*) is the family name, and Sākya (Sanskrit *Śākya*) is the name of the clan to which the *Buddha* belonged.

Tradition holds that the sons of King Okkāka of the Mahāsammata line were exiled through the plotting of their step-mother. These princes, in the course of their wanderings, arrived at the foothills of the Himalayas. Here, they met the sage Kapila, on whose advice and after whom, they founded the city of Kapilavatthu, the site of Kapila. King Okkāka, hearing of the enterprise, exclaimed: *Sākya vata bho rājakumārā* "capable indeed are the noble princes." Hence, the clan and the kingdom they founded were known by the name Sākya.

The Sākya kingdom was situated in Southern Nepal and extended over much of modern Oudh.

[11] Sanskrit *Śuddhodana*.

[12] Sanskrit *Mahā Prajāpatī Gautamī*.

Great were the rejoicings of the people over the birth of this illustrious prince. An ascetic of high spiritual attainments, named Asita, also known as Kāladevala, was particularly pleased to hear this happy news, and, being a tutor of the King, visited the palace to see the royal babe. Upon arriving, he sat down and asked: "Where is the child? Show Him to me." The King, who felt honored by this unexpected visit, carried the child up to him in order to make the child pay due reverence, but, to the surprise of all, the child's legs turned and rested on the matted locks of the ascetic. Instantly, the ascetic rose from his seat and, foreseeing with his supernormal vision the child's future greatness, saluted Him with clasped hands.[13] The royal father did likewise.

The great ascetic smiled at first and then was sad. Questioned regarding his mixed feelings, he answered that he smiled because the prince would eventually become a *Buddha*, an Enlightened One, and he was sad because he would not be able to benefit from the superior wisdom of the Enlightened One owing to his prior death and rebirth in a Formless Plane (*arūpaloka*).[14]

Naming Ceremony

On the fifth day after the prince's birth, He was named Siddhattha, which means "wish fulfilled." His family name was Gotama.[15]

In accordance with ancient Indian custom, 108 learned Brahmins were invited to the palace for the naming ceremony. Among them, there were eight distinguished men who were specialists in interpreting body marks. Examining the characteristic marks of the child, seven of them raised two fingers each, indicative of two alternative possibilities, and said that He would either become a Universal Monarch or a *Buddha*. But the youngest, Koṇḍañña,[16] who excelled the others in wisdom, noticing that the hair on the forehead turned to the right, raised only one finger and convincingly declared that the prince would definitely retire from the world and become a *Buddha*.

Plowing Festival

A very remarkable incident took place in Prince Siddhattha's childhood. It was an unprecedented spiritual experience that later, during His search for the Truth, served as the key to His Enlightenment.[17]

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[13] On Asita's advice, his nephew Nālaka renounced the world, and, when the prince, as expected, attained Buddhahood, he heard His teachings and became an *Arahat*. See Nālaka Sutta, *Sutta Nipāta*.

[14] *Arūpalokas* are immaterial planes (*lokas*) where those who have developed the *arūpajjhānas* (immaterial absorptions) are born.

[15] Sanskrit *Siddhārtha Gautama*.

[16] Hearing that Prince Siddhattha renounced the world, this Koṇḍañña and four sons of the other seven Brahmins retired from the world and joined Him as His followers. These were the first five Chief Disciples of the *Buddha*.

[17] See *Majjhima Nikāya*, part I, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, no. 36.

To promote agriculture, King Suddhodana arranged for a plowing festival. It was, indeed, a festive occasion for all, as both nobles and commoners, decked in their best attire, participated in the ceremony. On the appointed day, the King, accompanied by his courtiers, went to the field, taking with him the young prince[18] together with the nurses. Placing the child on a screened and canopied couch under the cool shade of a rose-apple tree to be watched by the nurses, the King participated in the plowing festival. When the festival was at the height of gaiety, the nurses stole away from the prince's presence to catch a glimpse of the festivities.

In striking contrast to the mirth and merriment of the festival, it was all calm and quiet under the rose-apple tree. All the conditions conducive to quiet meditation being there, the pensive child, young in years but old in wisdom, sat cross-legged and seized the opportunity to commence that all-important practice of intense concentration on the breath — on inhalations and exhalations — which gained for Him, then and there, that one-pointedness of mind known as *samādhi* (concentration), and He thus developed the first *jhāna*[19] (meditative absorption). The child's nurses, who had abandoned their precious charge to enjoy themselves at the festival, suddenly remembering their duty, hastened to the child and were amazed to see Him sitting cross-legged plunged deep in meditation. When the King heard of it, he hurried to the spot and, seeing the child in meditation position, saluted Him, saying: "This, dear child, is my second obeisance."

Education

As a royal child, Prince Siddhattha must have received an education that befitted a prince. This would have included a wide range of subjects, including languages and mathematics. As a scion of the Warrior (*Khattiya*[20]) Caste, He would also have received special training in the art of warfare and sports such as wrestling and archery. He is reported to have been a tall, strong, and handsome youth and was noted for His good manners, kindness, and compassion for living things.

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[18] Prince Siddhattha was seven years old when this event took place.

[19] *Jhāna* (Sanskrit *dhyāna*) is the name for a highly developed state of mental concentration (*samādhi*). According to the *suttanta* method, there are eight such states: four fine-material absorptions (*rūpajjhāna*) and four immaterial absorptions (*arūpajjhāna*). According to the *Abhidhamma* method, on the other hand, there are nine such states.

[20] At the time of the *Buddha*, Indian society was divided into four fundamental social classes, or castes (Pāḷi *vaṇṇa*, Sanskrit *varṇa*). The first was the Priestly, or Brahmin Caste (Pāḷi and Sanskrit *Brāhmaṇa*), which included priests, philosophers, scholars, and religious leaders. Next was the Warrior Caste (Pāḷi *Khattiya*, Sanskrit *Kṣatriya*), which included the rulers, generals, officers, and civil authorities. Then came the Merchant Caste (Pāḷi *Vessa*, Sanskrit *Vaiśya*), which also included farmers. Finally, there was the lowest caste (Pāḷi *Sudda*, Sanskrit *Śūdra*), which included the workers and servants. Each caste had its own duties and responsibilities. For example, the duty of the *Khattiya* caste was the protection of the community. In those days, the lines of demarcation between each caste were variable and not clearly defined. The complexity and rigidity of the modern caste system was unknown. Cf. Christmas Humphreys, *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism* (London: Curzon Press [1984]), pp. 111—112. See also, *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala [1989]), pp. 44, 186, and 400.

Married Life

At the early age of sixteen, Prince Siddhattha married His beautiful cousin Princess Yasodharā,[21] who was of equal age. For nearly thirteen years after His happy marriage, He led a luxurious life, blissfully ignorant of the vicissitudes of life outside the palace gates. Of His luxurious life as prince, He states:

> *"I was delicate, excessively delicate. In my father's dwelling, three lotus ponds were made purposely for me. Blue lotuses blossomed in one, red in another, and white in another. I used no sandalwood that was not of Kāsi.*[22] *My turban, tunic, dress, and cloak were all from Kāsi.*
>
> *"Night and day, a white parasol was held over me so that I might not be touched by heat or cold, dust, leaves, or dew.*
>
> *"There were three palaces built for me — one for the cold season, one for the hot season, and one for the rainy season. During the four rainy months, I lived in the palace for the rainy season without ever coming down from it, entertained all the while by female musicians. Just as, in the houses of others, food from the husks of rice, together with sour gruel, is given to the slaves and workmen, even so, in my father's house, food with rice and meat was given to the slaves and workmen."*[23]

With the march of time, truth gradually dawned on Him. His contemplative nature and boundless compassion did not permit Him to spend His time in the mere enjoyment of the fleeting pleasures of the royal palace. He knew no personal grief, but He felt a deep pity for the suffering of humanity. Amidst comfort and prosperity, He realized the universality of sorrow.

Renunciation

Surrounded by every conceivable luxury, the young prince was protected by His anxious father, King Suddhodana, from even the slightest exposure to ugliness and suffering. His days were spent in delightful gardens, from which every withered leaf had been deliberately removed. The melodious singing of birds and the splash of fountains soothed His royal ears; and, where the green shade of cool trees shielded Him and His companions from the noonday heat, the air was filled with the languorous scent of jasmine and frangipani. And at night, in the lofty hall of the palace, where great fans of peacock feathers gently stirred the air, He would watch the dancing girls weaving sinuous patterns in the soft glow of perfumed lamps until, lulled by drowsy music, He would drift

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[21] Sanskrit *Yaśodharā*. She was also known as Bhaddakaccānā, Bimbā, and Rāhulamātā. Note: According to the *Chronicle of the Buddhas*, Bhaddakaccānā was her name before marriage.

[22] A province in Central India noted for its silk. Modern Benares (Vārāṇasi; Kāsi) was its capital.

[23] *Anguttara Nikāya*, part I, 3:38.

into the peaceful sleep of youth. The dancers would, one by one, stretch themselves out on the carpeted floor and relax their tired limbs; the fingers of the sitar player would slip from the strings, and all would be quiet as the flickering lamps burned out.

And so it was from day to day — a light and carefree existence. Why, then, was the young prince not happy? Could it be that He was troubled by the dark knowledge from a life before this? Did He suspect that the world outside the palace walls was not the carefree, exquisite, and gentle world He knew — the world that had been artificially created for Him by His father? Or did He have the unconscious knowledge that His life was already dedicated to something other than this, and that a supreme, self-chosen task lay before Him?

We do not know. But a time came when, at last, four sights met His eyes that changed the whole course of His life. This turning point came when He was twenty-nine years old. All the diversions provided by His father did not prevent the prince from feeling bored and restless. Hence, it came to pass that, one day, He summoned His favorite charioteer and personal attendant Channa and asked to be taken for a ride in the countryside, outside the palace walls. Channa chose four fine horses and harnessed them to a magnificent chariot. In the meantime, King Suddhodana took every precaution to ensure that nothing would mar the excursion. However, in spite of the efforts taken by the King, the prince and Channa had not gone far before they came upon a hunched-up, tired-looking old man standing in the roadway.

"What is that?" He asked Channa, bringing the chariot to a stop. "It looks like a man, but his hair is all white, he has no teeth, his cheeks are sunken, his skin is dry and wrinkled, and his eyes are bleary. Look at his bent back, his ribs are protruding, and his thin crooked arms and legs seem as though they can hardly support his wretched frame, so that he has to lean on a stick. What kind of man is that?"

"That", replied Channa, apparently making little effort to hide the truth, "is an old man. He is someone who has been living for a long time, perhaps sixty, seventy, or even eighty or more years, so that his body is old and worn out. It is nothing to be dismayed about, since it is inevitable. No one escapes old age."

"Do you mean to say that all of us will become like that, that we will all become old and worn out?" asked Siddhattha. "That Yasodharā, and you, and all my youthful companions, and even myself as well, will one day look like that?"

"Yes, my Lord," answered Channa. "It is everyone's lot."

Prince Siddhattha was so upset that He could not go on with the ride. Instead, He turned the chariot around and went back to the palace, deep in thought, too troubled to speak. When the King saw Channa and his son returning so soon after they had set out on their excursion, he asked Channa what had happened, and, when he heard the reason, he cried out in despair: "Now you have destroyed me!" But the King was not one to give up so easily. In an effort to remove the memory of the old man from Prince Siddhattha's mind, he ordered special dramas and amusements to be provided. He also doubled the guard around the palace grounds and ordered everyone to keep quiet and act as though nothing unusual had happened.

Undeterred, Siddhattha decided to go for a chariot ride with Channa outside the palace walls a second time, and, on this occasion, they encountered a man who was ill. He was so weak that he could not stand up. Instead, he was rolling and writhing on the ground. His eyes were bloodshot, his mouth was frothing, and he groaned and beat his chest in agony. As before, Channa explained the situation, and, once more, Siddhattha was upset. "Is this a rare thing, or does it happen to everybody?" he asked.

"Everybody is liable to get ill, my Lord," answered Channa. But then he added a note of reassurance: "However, if a man is careful about what he eats and drinks, and if he keeps clean, gets proper rest, and has plenty of exercise, he is more likely to remain healthy. There is no need to worry."

"No need to worry!" exclaimed the prince. "First, I saw the horror of decay and old age, and now it seems that everyone is liable to find himself in such a wretched state as this man!"

As before, they cut short their excursion and returned to the palace. Again, Siddhattha remained deep in thought about what he had seen.

A third time, Siddhattha and Channa went on an excursion outside the palace walls, and, this time, they came upon a funeral procession. The mourners were wailing and beating their breasts, while, in contrast, the corpse that they were carrying lay still and lifeless like a mannequin. Channa replied to Siddhattha's inevitable questions and then went on: "Death, my Lord, is the end of life. When life ceases, that is death. One's body dies when it can go on no longer because of old age and decay, or else it dies because of disease. Breathing stops, and the heart no longer beats. However, there is nothing strange about it. It is as common as birth, for everyone who lives must sooner or later die. There is nothing anyone can do about it, since it is the nature of things, so there is no need to worry about it. Just hope for a long life."

Siddhattha thought deeply about this as well as the sights He had seen on His two previous excursions, and He came to realize that these unpleasant facts, which had been hidden from Him for so long due to the misguided efforts of His father, represented the true nature of existence — suffering (*dukkha*). Then, He began to wonder whether there might not be some way out of this dilemma, some means of escape. "Must everyone I love, and myself as well, simply stand by helplessly while old age, sickness, and death run their course?" He asked Himself as He and Channa drove back to the palace.

Subsequently, Siddhattha and Channa went beyond the palace walls a fourth and last time, and, as before, an unexpected sight awaited Siddhattha by the roadside. But this time, it was not a sight of despair. It was a man with a shaven head, simply dressed in a patched yellow robe, standing barefoot and holding an alms-bowl in his hand. His face bore a calm, thoughtful expression, and his gaze was directed downward, as though he was a person at peace, engrossed in pleasant thoughts. Halting the horses, Siddhattha asked Channa: "What is this? Is it a man or, indeed, a deity who stands there so calm and aloof, as if the joys and sorrows of the world do not touch him?"

Channa replied: "That, my Lord, is an ascetic. He is someone who has seen how old age, sickness, and death afflict all beings, and he has renounced the world to seek a solution to the enigma of life. He has no home but seeks shelter in caves and woods,

begging enough food for one frugal meal a day and living a life of discipline and simplicity, striving to be pure in word, deed, and thought and seeking liberation from the suffering of the world through meditation. He travels from place to place and tries to tell people how to live a good life and find happiness."

The artificial world of pleasure and beauty that His father had created for Him was shattered. It could not hold Him any longer. Realizing the worthlessness of sensory pleasures, so highly prized by the worldling (*puthujjana*), and appreciating the value of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), in which the wise (*paṇḍita*) seek delight, He decided to leave the life He had known to search for Truth (*sacca*) and Eternal Peace (*nibbāna*). "I must become like that ascetic. I, too, shall renounce this world and seek liberation from suffering." He later described His decision to a gathering of monks thus:

> *"Monks, before my Enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta,*[24] *I, too, being myself subject to birth, sought that which was also subject to birth; being myself subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, I sought that which was also subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement. Then, I considered thus: 'Why, being myself subject to birth, do I seek that which is also subject to birth? Why, being myself subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, do I seek that which is also subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement? Suppose that, being myself subject to birth, I seek the unborn supreme security from bondage, nibbāna. Suppose that, being myself subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, having understood the danger in that which is subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, I seek the unaging, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme security from bondage, nibbāna'."*[25]

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[24] Sanskrit *Bodhisattva*, "one who is aspiring to attain Buddhahood." A *Bodhisatta* is a being destined to Buddhahood, a future *Buddha*. According to the traditional belief, a *Bodhisatta*, before reaching his last birth as a *Buddha* on this earth, is living in the Tusita heaven, the heaven of bliss.

In the Pāḷi Canon and Commentaries, the designation "*Bodhisatta*" is given only to Prince Siddhattha before His Enlightenment and to His former existences. The *Buddha* Himself uses this term when speaking of His life prior to Enlightenment. Bodhisattahood is neither mentioned nor recommended as an ideal higher than or alternative to Arahatship, nor is there any record in the Pāḷi scriptures of a disciple declaring it to be his aspiration. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 41.

The so-called "*Bodhisattva* Ideal" plays an enormous role in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Furthermore, Mahāyāna Buddhism has created a whole host of mythical *Bodhisattvas*. Mahāyāna Buddhism also places great importance on the performance of rites and rituals, and it has developed secret rites (*tantra*) that had no place in the original Teachings of the *Buddha*. For details on the development of the "*Bodhisattva* Ideal", cf. especially Bhikkhu Nyanatusita himi (ed.), *The Bodhisattva Ideal: Essays on the Emergence of the Mahāyāna* (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [2013]).

[25] *Majjhima Nikāya*, part I, Ariyapariyesanā Sutta, no. 26; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pāḷi Canon* (Seattle, WA: PBS Pariyatti Editions [3rd ed. 1992]), p. 10; Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2005]), pp. 55—56.

In another discourse, He described His decision as follows:

> *"Here, Aggivessana,*[26] *before my Enlightenment, while I was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, I thought: 'Household life is crowded and dusty; life gone forth is wide open. It is not easy, while living at home, to lead the Holy Life, utterly perfect and pure as a polished shell. Suppose I shave off my hair and beard, put on the saffron-colored robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness'."*[27]

When, after much deliberation, this final decision was taken, the news of the birth of a son was conveyed to Him. Contrary to expectations, He was not overjoyed but regarded His first and only offspring as an impediment. An ordinary father would have welcomed the joyful tidings, but Prince Siddhattha, the extraordinary father that He was, exclaimed: "An impediment (*rāhu*) has been born; a fetter has arisen." The infant son was accordingly named Rāhula[28] by his grandfather, King Suddhodana.

The palace was no longer a congenial place to the contemplative Prince Siddhattha. Neither His charming young wife nor His lovable infant son could deter Him from changing the decision He had taken to renounce the world. He was destined to play an infinitely more important and beneficial role than that of a dutiful husband and father or even as a king of kings. The allurements of the palace were no longer cherished objects of delight to Him. The time was ripe to depart. Privately, His father, King Suddhodana, sensed the discontent in Siddhattha and resigned himself to losing his son.

Late into the night, when everyone else in the palace was sound asleep, the prince arose from His bed and dressed. He woke Channa and ordered him to saddle the horse Kanthaka. Then, one last time, He went to the suite of apartments occupied by the princess. Opening the door of the chamber, He stood at the threshold and cast a gentle glance on His wife and child, who were fast asleep. Great was His compassion for the two dear ones at this parting moment. Greater was His compassion for suffering humanity. He was not worried about the future worldly happiness and comfort of His wife and child, since they had everything in abundance and were well protected. It was not that He loved them the less, but He loved humanity more.

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[26] Saccaka, the son of Niganṭha Nātaputta, also known as Mahāvīra. Mahāvīra, who was a contemporary of the *Buddha*, established Jainism as a religious community, though the beginnings of Jainism go back much further than Mahāvīra. Here, Saccaka is being referred to by his clan name, Aggivessana.

[27] *Majjhima Nikāya*, part I, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, no. 36; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pāḷi Canon* (Seattle, WA: PBS Pariyatti Editions [3rd ed. 1992]), p. 10; Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2005]), p. 59.

[28] Literally, "bound or seized (*la*) by a fetter (*rāhu*)." Rāhula was seven years old when the *Buddha* returned to Kapilavatthu. It was then that his mother, Yasodharā, sent Rāhula to his father to ask for his inheritance, and the *Buddha* responded by having him ordained as a monk. This distressed the *Buddha's* father, King Suddhodana, and he explained to the *Buddha* the great pain that he had felt when the young prince had renounced the world. He asked, therefore, that, in the future, a son be ordained only with the permission of his parents. The *Buddha* agreed and made this one of the rules of the monastic order.

Leaving all behind, He stole away, with a light heart, from the palace at midnight and rode into the dark, accompanied only by His loyal charioteer. Alone and penniless, He set out in search of Truth and Peace. Thus did He renounce the world. It was not the renunciation of an old man who has had his fill of worldly life. It was not the renunciation of a poor man who had nothing to leave behind. It was the renunciation of a prince in the prime of manhood and in the plenitude of wealth and prosperity — a renunciation unparalleled in history.

He journeyed far and, crossing the river Anomā, rested on its banks. Here, He shaved His hair and beard and, handing over His garments and jewelry to Channa with instructions to return to the palace, assumed the simple saffron-colored garb of an ascetic and began to live a life of voluntary poverty. Prince Siddhattha was twenty-nine years old when He set out on this historic journey.

The Ascetic Gotama, as He was thenceforth called, who once lived in the lap of luxury, now became a penniless wanderer, living on what little the charity-minded gave of their own accord.

As an ascetic, He went south, where centers of learning and spiritual discipline flourished, and arrived, in due course, at Rājagaha, the capital of the Magadha kingdom. Bimbisāra, the king of Magadha, was impressed by the handsome appearance and the serene personality of this strange ascetic and visited Him when He was seated at the foot of a hill. The king, after he discovered that the ascetic was a former prince, offered Him every comfort and suggested that He should stay with him to share his kingdom. Gotama, however, rejected the king's offer, saying that He had no need of those things that He had renounced and that He was in search of truth. Bimbisāra then requested that, when Gotama obtained Enlightenment, He return to visit Rājagaha again, to which Gotama agreed.

He had no permanent abode. A shady tree or a lonely cave sheltered Him by day or night. Bare-footed and bare-headed, He walked in the scorching sun and in the piercing cold. With no possessions to call His own, but an alms-bowl to collect His food and robes just sufficient to cover His body, He concentrated all His energies on the quest for Truth.

Search

Thus, as a wanderer, a seeker after what is good, searching for the unsurpassed Peace, He approached Āḷāra Kālāma, a distinguished ascetic, and said: "I desire, friend Kālāma, to lead the Holy Life in this dispensation of yours." Thereupon, Āḷāra Kālāma told Him: "You may stay with me, O Venerable One. This teaching is of such sort that an intelligent man may realize, in a short time, by his own intuitive wisdom, his master's doctrine and abide in the attainment thereof."

Before long, He learned the doctrine taught by Āḷāra Kālāma, but it brought Him no closer to the realization of the highest Truth.

Then, the thought came to Him: When Āḷāra Kālāma declared: "Having myself realized the doctrine by intuitive knowledge, I 'abide in the attainment thereof,' it could not have been a mere profession of faith; surely, Āḷāra Kālāma lives having understood and perceived this doctrine."

Thereupon, He went to him and said: "How far, friend Kālāma, does this doctrine extend which you yourself have, with intuitive wisdom, realized and attained?"

Upon hearing this, Āḷāra Kālāma made known to Him the Realm of Nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*),[29] an advanced stage of concentration.

Then, it occurred to Him: "Not only in Āḷāra Kālāma are to be found faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. I, too, possess these virtues. How now if I strive to realize that doctrine that Āḷāra Kālāma says that he himself has realized and abides in the attainment thereof!"

So, before long, He realized, by His own intuitive wisdom, that doctrine and attained to that state, but it brought Him no realization of the highest Truth.

Then, He approached Āḷāra Kālāma and said: "Is this the full extent, friend Kālāma, of this doctrine of which you say you yourself have realized by your wisdom and abide in the attainment thereof?"

"But, I also, friend, have realized thus far in this doctrine and abide in the attainment thereof."

The unenvious teacher was delighted to hear of the success of his accomplished pupil. He honored Him by placing Him on a perfect level with himself and admiringly said:

> *"Happy, friend, are we, extremely happy, in that we look upon such a venerable fellow ascetic like you! That same doctrine which I myself have realized by my wisdom and proclaim, having attained thereunto, have you yourself realized by your wisdom and abide in the attainment thereof; and that doctrine which you yourself have realized by your wisdom and abide in the attainment thereof, that I myself have realized by my wisdom and proclaim, having attained thereunto. Thus, the doctrine which I know, you also know; and the doctrine which you know, that I know also. As I am, so are you; as you are, so am I. Come, friend, let both of us together lead the company of ascetics."*[30]

The Ascetic Gotama was not satisfied with a discipline and a doctrine that only led to a high degree of mental concentration but did not lead to "disgust, detachment, cessation (of suffering), tranquility, insight, enlightenment, and *nibbāna*." Nor was He anxious to lead a company of ascetics, even with the cooperation of another generous teacher of equal spiritual attainment, without first perfecting Himself. It was, He felt, a

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[29] The third *arūpajjhāna*.

[30] *Majjhima Nikāya*, part I, Ariyapariyesanā Sutta, no. 26; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pāḷi Canon* (Seattle, WA: PBS Pariyatti Editions [3rd ed. 1992]), pp. 13—14; Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2005]), p. 57.

case of the blind leading the blind. Dissatisfied with his teaching, He politely took His leave from Āḷāra Kālāma.

In those happy days, when there were no political disturbances, the intellectuals of India were preoccupied with the study and exposition of various philosophical and religious systems. All facilities were provided for those more spiritually inclined to lead holy lives in solitude in accordance with their temperaments, and most of these teachers had large followings of disciples. Consequently, it was not difficult for the Ascetic Gotama to find another religious teacher who was more advanced than the former.

On this occasion, He approached one Uddaka Rāmaputta and expressed His desire to lead the Holy Life in his dispensation. He was readily admitted as a pupil.

Before long, the intelligent Ascetic Gotama mastered the doctrine and attained the final stage of concentration, the Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception (*n'eva saññā n'āsaññāyatana*),[31] revealed by this teacher. This was the highest stage in worldly concentration, when consciousness becomes so subtle and refined that it cannot be said that a consciousness either exists or does not exist. Ancient Indian sages could not proceed further in spiritual development.

The noble teacher was delighted to hear of the success of his illustrious royal pupil. Unlike His former teacher, the present one honored Him by inviting Him to take full charge of all the disciples as their teacher. He said: "Happy, friend, are we, yea, extremely happy, in that we see such a venerable fellow ascetic as you! The doctrine that Rāma knows, you know; the doctrine that you know, Rāma knows. As is Rāma, so are you; as you are, so is Rāma. Come, friend, henceforth, you shall lead this company of ascetics!"

Still, the Ascetic Gotama felt that His quest for the highest Truth had not been achieved. He had gained complete mastery of His mind, but His ultimate goal was far ahead. He was seeking for the Highest, for *nibbāna* — the complete cessation of suffering, the total eradication of all forms of craving. Dissatisfied with this doctrine too, He bid farewell to Uddaka Rāmaputta and departed, no longer content to remain there.

He realized that His spiritual aspirations were far higher than those under whom He had chosen to study. He realized that there was no one capable enough to teach Him what He yearned for — the highest Truth. He also realized that the highest Truth is to be found within oneself and ceased to seek external help.

There was another path He had not yet tried. It was a fearful and dangerous one; nevertheless, He was determined to follow it. Living in the depths of the forest or in cemeteries, or wandering from place to place homeless and without shelter, there were ascetics who subjected themselves to the most extreme physical torture. Their belief was that, by fasting and mortification of the flesh, they could release themselves from earthly bondage; they hoped that, by dying as to the body, they could obtain immortality in the spirit. To them, the body was a prison that kept them from union with the "divine soul", and their aim was to destroy its hold while they yet lived. Among them were some who

[31] The fourth *arūpajjhāna*.

wanted power, for it was also believed that, by protracted austerities, so much spiritual strength could be accumulated that even the gods would be forced to obey their will.

The Ascetic Gotama did not want that. He longed only for the end of suffering, and perhaps this was the way to find it. He left the ashrams, as He had left the royal palace, and took to the life of a forest-dwelling ascetic. For six years, He followed that path with unflagging resolution. Without shelter, His body exposed to the burning summer sun, the drenching rains of the monsoon season, and the cold of winter nights, He lived from day to day, from year to year. Gradually, He reduced His food until He was subsisting on a handful each time of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch soup or pea soup, and His body became a skeleton covered only by parched, weathered skin. Other ascetics, men who had been practicing austerities less rigorously, marveled at His zeal, no less than at His powers of endurance. It seemed that only by a miracle could that emaciated body still harbor life. ■

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2

His Struggle for Enlightenment

"It is easy to do things that are bad and unbeneficial to oneself, but it is extremely difficult, indeed, to do things that are beneficial and good."[32]

Struggle

Meeting with disappointment, but not discouraged, the Ascetic Gotama, seeking for the incomparable Peace, the highest Truth, wandered through the district of Magadha and arrived, in due course, at Uruvelā, the market town of Senāni. There, He found a lovely spot of ground, a charming forest grove, with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, sandy banks, and, nearby, was a village where He could obtain His food. Then, He thought thus:

> *"This is an agreeable piece of ground, this is a delightful grove, with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, sandy banks and, nearby, is a village where I can obtain my food. This will serve for the striving of a clansman intent on striving."*[33]

The place was congenial for His meditation. The atmosphere was peaceful. The surroundings were pleasant. The scenery was charming. Alone, He resolved to settle down there to achieve His desired goal.

Hearing of His renunciation, Koṇḍañña, the youngest Brahmin who had predicted Prince Siddhattha's future at the naming ceremony, and four sons of the other sages — Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, and Assaji — also renounced the world and joined His company.

In olden days in India, great importance was attached to rites, ceremonies, penances, and sacrifices. It was then a popular belief that no deliverance could be obtained unless one leads a life of strict asceticism. Accordingly, for six long years, the Ascetic Gotama made a superhuman effort, practicing all forms of the severest austerity. His delicate body was nearly reduced to a skeleton. The more He tormented His body, the further His goal receded from Him.

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[32] *Dhammapada*, XII, The Self, verse 163.
[33] *Majjhima Nikāya*, part I, Ariyapariyesanā Sutta, no. 26.

How strenuously He struggled, the various methods He employed, and how He eventually succeeded are graphically described in various *suttas*. His preliminary effort is described in the Mahāsaccaka Sutta[34] thus:

> *"Then, the following thought occurred to me: 'What if I were to clench my teeth, press my tongue against the palate, and, with [moral] thoughts, hold down, subdue, and destroy my [immoral] thoughts!' So I clenched my teeth, pressed my tongue against the palate, and strove to hold down, subdue, and destroy my [immoral] thoughts with [moral] thoughts. As I struggled thus, perspiration streamed forth from my armpits. Like a strong man who might seize a weaker man by head or shoulders and hold him down, force him down, and bring him into submission, even so did I struggle. Strenuous and indomitable was my energy. My mindfulness was established and unperturbed. My body was, however, fatigued and was not calmed as a result of that painful endeavor, being overpowered by exertion. Even though such painful sensations arose in me, they did not at all affect my mind.*
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> *"Then, I thought to myself: 'What if I were to practice the non-breathing austerity.' Accordingly, I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth and nostrils. As I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths from mouth and nostrils, the air coming out of my ears created an exceedingly loud noise. Just as a blacksmith's bellows make an exceedingly great noise when blown, so, too, there was a loud noise coming out of my ears when I stopped breathing. Nevertheless, my energy was strenuous and indomitable. Established and unperturbed was my mindfulness. Yet, my body was fatigued and was not calmed as a result of this painful endeavor, being overpowered by exertion. Even though such painful sensations arose in me, they did not at all affect my mind.*
>
> *"Then, I thought to myself: 'What if I were to practice the non-breathing austerity further.' Accordingly, I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nostrils, and ears. And as I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths from my mouth, nostrils, and ears, the [imprisoned] air beat upon my head with great violence. Just as if a strong man were to bore one's head with a sharp drill, even so did the air beat my head with great violence when I stopped breathing. Even though such painful sensations arose in me, they did not at all affect my mind.*
>
> *"Then, I thought to myself: 'What if I were to practice the non-breathing austerity again.' Accordingly, I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nostrils, and ears. And as I stopped breathing thus, terrible pains arose in my head. Just as if a strong man were to bind one's head tightly with a hard leather strap, even so were the terrible pains that arose in my head.*

[34] *Majjhima Nikāya*, part I, no. 36; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pāḷi Canon* (Seattle, WA: PBS Pariyatti Editions [3rd ed. 1992]), pp. 17—18; Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2005]), pp. 61—63.

Nevertheless, my energy was strenuous. Such painful sensations did not affect my mind.

"Then, I thought to myself: 'What if I were to practice the non-breathing austerity yet again.' Accordingly, I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nostrils, and ears. And as I stopped breathing thus, violent winds pierced my belly. Just as if a skillful butcher or a butcher's apprentice were to rip up the belly with a sharp butcher's knife, even so, violent winds pierced my belly. Nevertheless, my energy was strenuous. Such painful sensations did not affect my mind.

"Again, I thought to myself: 'What if I were to practice the non-breathing austerity once again.' Accordingly, I stopped the in-breaths and out-breaths through my mouth, nostrils, and ears. And as I stopped breathing thus, a tremendous burning sensation pervaded my body. Just as if two strong men were to seize a weaker man by his arms and scorch and thoroughly burn him in a pit of glowing coals, even so did a severe burning sensation pervade my body. Nevertheless, my energy was strenuous. Such painful sensations did not affect my mind.

"Thereupon, some of the deities who were watching me said thus: 'The Ascetic Gotama is dead.' Others remarked: 'The Ascetic Gotama is not dead yet but is dying.' While others said: 'The Ascetic Gotama is neither dead nor dying but is an Arahat, for such is the way in which Arahats abide'."

Change of Method: Abstinence from Food

"Then, I thought to myself: 'What if I were to practice complete abstinence from food.' Then, deities came to me and said: 'Good sir, do not practice complete abstinence from food. If you do so, we will pour heavenly food into your body through the pores of your skin, and so you will be nourished.' And I thought: 'If I claim to be completely fasting while these deities are nourishing my body by pouring heavenly food through the pores of my skin, it would be a fraud on my part.' So I refused them saying: 'There is no need.'

"Then, the following thought occurred to me: 'What if I take very little food, a small quantity each time of the juice of beans or lentils or vetch or peas.' So, I took very little food, a small quantity each time of the juice of beans or lentils or vetch or peas. In so doing, my body became extremely emaciated. Due to eating so little, my limbs became like the jointed segments of vine stems or bamboo stems. Due to eating so little, my backside became like a camel's hoof. Due to eating so little, the vertebrae stood out from the skin on my back like a string of beads. Due to eating so little, my ribs jutted out like the rafters of an old roofless barn. Due to eating so little, the gleam left my eyes, and they sank deep in their sockets like the stars that may be seen reflected in the water of a deep well. Due to eating so little, my scalp shriveled and withered like slices of a bitter

pumpkin, which become shriveled and withered by the wind and sun. Due to eating so little, I could feel my backbone when I touched the skin on my stomach, and I could feel the skin of my stomach when I touched my backbone. I was so thin that the skin of my stomach clung to my backbone, and when I urinated or defecated, I would stumble and fall down in that very spot. Due to eating so little, when I tried to ease my pain by rubbing my limbs with my hands, the hair, rotted at its roots, fell from my body as I rubbed.

"When people saw me, some of them said: 'The Ascetic Gotama is black.' Some said: 'The Ascetic Gotama is not black but blue.' Others said: 'The Ascetic Gotama is neither black nor blue but golden colored.' That is how much the pure color of my skin had deteriorated from eating so little.

"Then, the following thought occurred to me: 'Whatever recluses and Brahmins of the past might have experienced in the way of acute, painful, sharp, and piercing sensations, they could only have experienced them to a degree as high as this and not beyond. Whatever recluses and Brahmins of the future will experience in the way of acute, painful, sharp, and piercing sensations, they, too, can experience them only to a degree as high as this and not beyond. Yet, even though I have practiced all of these bitter and difficult austerities, I have not attained any superhuman states nor any supreme knowledge and insight worthy of the noble ones. Could there be another path to Enlightenment?'"[35]

Temptation by Māra, the Evil One

His prolonged, painful austerities proved utterly futile. They only resulted in the exhaustion of His valuable energy. Though physically fit, His delicately nurtured body could not possibly stand the great strain. His graceful form completely faded almost beyond recognition. His golden-colored skin turned pale, His blood dried up, His sinews and muscles shriveled up, His eyes were sunken and blurred. To all appearances, He was a living skeleton. He was almost on the verge of death.

At this critical stage, while He was abiding on the banks of the Nerañjarā River still striving after the Highest Good (*padhāna*), the incomparable path to Supreme Peace, along came Namuci,[36] uttering kind words thus:

"You are lean and deformed. Death is near to you. A thousand parts of you belong to death; to life, there remains but one. Live, O good sir! Life is better.

[35] *Majjhima Nikāya*, part I, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, no. 36; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pāḷi Canon* (Seattle, WA: PBS Pariyatti Editions [3rd ed. 1992]), pp. 18—21; Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2005]), pp. 63—64.

[36] Another name for Māra. According to the scriptures, there are five kinds of Māras: (1) Deity Māra (*Devaputta*); (2) passions, or defilements (*kilesa*); (3) karmic activities (*abhisaṁkhāra*); (4) aggregates (*khandha*); and (5) death (*maccu*).

By living, you could perform merit. By leading a life of celibacy and making fire sacrifices, much merit could be acquired. What will you do with this striving? Hard is the path of striving, difficult and not easily accomplished."

Reciting these words, Māra stood in the presence of the Exalted One. The Exalted One replied thus to Māra:

"O Evil One, kinsman of the heedless! You have come here for your own sake. Even the tiniest bit of merit is of no avail. You should speak like this to those who are in need of merit, O Māra. Confidence (saddhā), self-control (tapo), perseverance (viriya), and wisdom (paññā) are mine. Why do you question me, who is thus intent, about life?

"Even the streams and rivers will be dried up by the wind. Why should not my blood dry up through practicing austerities? When blood dries up, the bile and phlegm also dry up. When my body wastes away, more and more does my mind become clarified. Still more do my mindfulness, wisdom, and concentration become firm.

"While I live thus, experiencing the utmost pain, my mind does not long for lust. Behold the purity of a being!

"Desire for gratification of the senses (kāma) is your first army. The second is called aversion (arati) for the Holy Life (brahmacariya). The third is hunger and thirst (khuppīpāsā).[37] *The fourth is called craving (taṇhā). The fifth is sloth and torpor (thīna-middha). The sixth is called fear (bhīru). The seventh is doubt (vicikicchā),*[38] *and the eighth is distraction and stubbornness (makkha-thambha). The ninth is gain (lābha), praise (siloka) and honor (sakkāra), and ill-gotten fame (yasa). The tenth is the extolling of oneself and contempt for others (attukkaṁ-sanaparavam-bhana).*

"This, Namuci, is your army, the opposing host of the Evil One. He who does not overcome that army is a coward, but he who does overcome it obtains happiness.

"Do you see this muñja[39] *that I am wearing? I do not care about life in this world! I would rather die in battle than live in defeat. There are some ascetics and Brahmins who are not engaged in this battle — they will never know nor tread the path of the virtuous. Seeing the army all around me, with Māra riding on an elephant, I go forward into battle. Māra shall not drive me from my position. Even though the whole world, including the gods, cannot defeat that army of yours, I am going to destroy it with the power of Wisdom as I would an unbaked clay pot with a stone.*

[37] Resulting from voluntary poverty.
[38] That is, indecision as to the certainty of the Goal.
[39] Warriors wore a *muñja* grass crest on their heads or on their banners to indicate that they would not retreat from the battlefield.

"With my thoughts under control and well-established in Mindfulness (sati), I shall wander from country to country training many disciples. Diligent, intent, and practicing my Teachings, they will disregard you and will attain that, which having been attained, will lead them not to grief."[40]

The Middle Path

The Ascetic Gotama was now fully convinced, on the basis of His own experience, of the utter futility of self-mortification, which, though considered indispensable for Liberation by the ascetic philosophers of the day, actually weakened one's intellect and beat down one's spirit. He abandoned forever this painful extreme, as did He the other extreme of self-indulgence, which tends to retard moral progress. He conceived the idea of adopting the Middle Path (*majjhimā-paṭipadā*), which later became one of the salient features of His Teaching.

He recalled how, when His father was engaged in plowing, He sat in the cool shade of the rose-apple tree, absorbed in the contemplation of His in-breaths and out-breaths, which resulted in the attainment of the first *jhāna* (absorption). Thereupon, He thought to Himself: "Well, this is the path to Enlightenment."

He realized that Enlightenment could not be gained with such an utterly exhausted body. Physical fitness was essential for spiritual progress. Consequently, He decided to nourish His body sparingly and took some coarse food, both hard and soft.

The five favorite disciples, who were attending on Him with great hopes, thinking that whatever truth the Ascetic Gotama would comprehend would then be imparted to them, felt disappointed at this unexpected change of method. Thereupon, they left Him and the place too and went to Isipatana, saying that: "The Ascetic Gotama has become luxurious, has ceased from striving, and has returned to the life of comfort."

At a crucial time, when help was most welcome, His companions deserted Him, leaving Him alone. He was not discouraged, but their voluntary departure was advantageous to Him, though their presence during His great struggle had been helpful. Alone and undistracted, in a peaceful forest setting, great men often realize deep truths and solve intricate problems.

The Dawn of Truth

Regaining His lost strength through eating some coarse food, He easily developed the first *jhāna*, which He had gained in His youth.[41] By degrees, He developed the second, third, and fourth *jhānas* as well.

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[40] *Sutta Nipāta*, Padhāna Sutta.

[41] When Prince Siddhattha was seven years old, King Suddhodana took Him to a plowing festival. During the festivities, the young prince was taken by His attendants to rest under a rose-apple tree on a specially-prepared couch. While seated there, He forgot about the festival and fell into meditation.

By developing the *jhānas*, He gained perfect one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) of the mind. His mind was like a polished mirror, where everything is reflected in its true perspective.

Thus, with thoughts tranquilized, purified, cleansed, free from lust and impurity, pliable, alert, steady, and unshakable, He directed His mind to the knowledge regarding "The Remembrance of Past Births" (*pubbe-nivāsānussati ñāṇa*). He recalled the circumstances of His former existences as follows: first one life, then two lives, then three, four, five, ten, twenty, up to fifty lives; then a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand; then the dissolution of many world cycles, then the evolution of many world cycles, then both the dissolution and evolution of many world cycles. In that place, He was of such a name, such a family, such a caste, such a dietary, such the pleasure and pain He experienced, such His life's end. Departing from there, He came into existence elsewhere — then such was His name, such His family, such His caste, such His dietary, such the pleasure and pain He experienced, such His life's end. Departing from there, He came into existence here. Thus, He recalled the circumstances of His former lives. *This, indeed, was the First Knowledge that He realized in the first watch of the night.*

Dispelling, thus, ignorance with regard to the past, He directed His purified mind to "The Knowledge of the Disappearing and Reappearing of Beings" (*cutūpapāta ñāṇa*). With clairvoyant vision, purified and supernormal, He perceived beings disappearing from one state of existence and reappearing in another; He beheld the lowly and the noble, the beautiful and the ugly, the happy and the miserable, all passing according to their deeds. He knew that these good individuals, by evil deeds, words, and thoughts, by belittling the Noble Ones, by believing that which is false, and by conforming to the mistaken views of others, had been born in sorrowful states after death and the dissolution of their bodies. He knew that these good individuals, by good deeds, words, and thoughts, by respecting the Noble Ones, by believing that which is true, and by conforming to the truth, had been born in happy states after death and the dissolution of their bodies. Thus, with clairvoyant supernormal vision, He beheld the disappearing and reappearing of beings. *This, indeed, was the Second Knowledge that He realized in the middle watch of the night.*

Dispelling, thus, ignorance with regard to the future, He directed His purified mind to "The Knowledge of the Cessation of Corruptions"[42] (*āsavakkhaya ñāṇa*). He realized in accordance with fact: "This is Suffering (*dukkha-sacca*)," "This is the Arising of Suffering (*samudaya-sacca*)," "This is the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha-sacca*)," "This is the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*magga-sacca*)." Likewise, in accordance with fact, He realized: "These are the Corruptions (*āsavas*)," "This is the Arising of Corruptions," "This is the Cessation of Corruptions," "This is the Path leading to the Cessation of Corruptions." Thus cognizing, thus perceiving, His mind was

[42] *Āsavas* "corruptions". These *āsavas* extend to the highest plane of existence, with respect to spheres, or up to the *Gotrabhū* state, with respect to mind-flux. There are four *āsavas*: (1) sensory desires, that is, desire for gratification of the senses (*kāma*); (2) desire for (eternal) existence (*bhava*); (3) false views (*diṭṭhi*); and (4) ignorance (*avijjā*). In this particular text, only three are mentioned. Here, *bhava* means the desire to be born in the realms of form (*rūpa bhava*) and the formless realms (*arūpa bhava*).

delivered from the Corruption of Craving for the Gratification of the Senses (*kāmāsava*), from the Corruption of Craving for (eternal) Existence (*bhavāsava*), and from the Corruption of Ignorance (*avijjāsava*). Being delivered, He knew: "Delivered am I," and He realized: "Rebirth is ended; fulfilled is the Holy Life; done what was to be done; there will be no more of this state again." *This was the Third Knowledge that He realized in the last watch of the night*. Ignorance was dispelled, and wisdom arose; darkness vanished, and light arose. ■

3

Buddhahood

"All the effort must be made by you; the Tathāgatas can only show the way."[43]

Characteristics of the Buddha

After a stupendous struggle of six strenuous years, in His 35th year, the Ascetic Gotama, unaided and unguided by any supernatural agency, and, relying solely on His own efforts and wisdom, eradicated all defilements, ended the process of grasping, and, realizing things as they truly are by His own intuitive knowledge, became a *Buddha* — an Enlightened or Awakened One.

Thereafter, He was known as Buddha Gotama,[44] one of a long series of *Buddhas* who appeared in the past and who will appear in the future. He was not born a *Buddha* but became a *Buddha* by His own efforts.

The Pāḷi term *Buddha* is derived from *budh-* "to understand, to be awakened." Inasmuch as He fully comprehended the Four Noble Truths and arose from the slumbers of ignorance (*avijjā*), He is called a *Buddha*. Since He not only comprehended but also expounded the doctrine and enlightened others, He is called *Sammā Sambuddha*, "A Fully Enlightened One," to distinguish Him from *Pacceka Buddhas* ("Individual" *Buddhas*), who only comprehend the doctrine but are incapable of enlightening others.

Before His Enlightenment, He was called *Bodhisatta*,[45] which means "one who is aspiring to attain Buddhahood." Every aspirant to Buddhahood passes through the *Bodhisatta* Period — a period of intense exercise and development of ten transcendental virtues (the so-called "perfections" [*pāramī* or *pāramitā*]): (1) generosity (*dāna*); (2) morality (discipline) (*sīla*); (3) renunciation (of worldly ties) (*nekkhamma*); (4) wisdom (*paññā*); (5) energy (perseverance) (*viriya*); (6) patience (endurance) (*khanti*); (7) truthfulness (*sacca*); (8) determination (to attain the Goal — *nibbāna*) (*adhiṭṭhāna*); (9) loving-kindness (that is, unlimited, universal love and goodwill) (*mettā*); and (10) perfect equanimity (*upekkhā*).

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[43] The *Dhammapada*, XX, The Path, verse 276.

[44] His disciples addressed Him as *Buddha* "Enlightened One," *Bhagavā* "Exalted One," *Sugata* "Well-gone One," etc., while non-followers addressed Him as *Bho Gotama* "Venerable Gotama," *Samana Gotama* "Ascetic Gotama," etc. Referring to Himself, the *Buddha* used the term *Tathāgata*, meaning "He who has thus come," "He who has thus gone."

[45] Sanskrit *Bodhisattva*. See footnote 24.

In any particular era, there can arise only one *Sammā Sambuddha* (A Fully Enlightened *Buddha*). Just as certain plants and trees can bear only one flower, just so, one world-system (*lokadhātu*) can bear only one *Sammā Sambuddha*.

A *Buddha* is a unique being. Such a being arises but rarely in this world and is born out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit, and happiness of gods[46] and men. The *Buddha* is called *acchariya manussa* since He was a Wonderful Man. He is called *amatassa dātā* since He is the Giver of Deathlessness. He is called *varado* since He is the Giver of the Purest Love, the Profoundest Wisdom, and the Highest Truth. He is also called *Dhammassāmi* since He is the Lord of the *Dhamma*[47] (Doctrine).

As the *Buddha* Himself says:

> *"The Accomplished One (Tathāgata), the Worthy One (Arahatta), the Fully Enlightened One (Sammā Sambuddha), is the Originator of the Unarisen Way, the Producer of the Unproduced Way, the Proclaimer of the Unproclaimed Way, the Knower of the Way, the Beholder of the Way, the Cognizer of the Way, and His disciples now dwell following that Way and become possessed of it afterward."*[48]

The *Buddha* had no teacher for His Enlightenment: *na me ācariyo atthi* "I have no teacher" are His own words. He did receive His mundane knowledge from His lay teachers,[49] but He had no teachers for His supramundane knowledge, which He realized by His own intuitive wisdom. If He had received His knowledge from another teacher or from another religious system such as Hinduism, which was the religion in which He was brought up, He could not have said of Himself that He was the Incomparable Teacher (*ahaṁ satthā anuttaro*). In His first discourse, He declared that light arose concerning things that had not been heard before.

> *"I am the one who has transcended all, a knower of all, unsullied among all things, renouncing all, by the ceasing of craving am I freed. Having known this all for myself, to whom should I point as teacher?*
>
> *"I have no teacher, and there exists no one else in all the world like me, with all its devas, because there is no one who is my counterpart.*

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[46] *Devas* "heavenly, or celestial, beings; gods; deities." *Devas* are beings who inhabit celestial planes and who, as a rule, are invisible to humans. However, like all other beings, including humans, they are subject to repeated rebirth, old age, and death and are, thus, not freed from the cycle of rebirth and suffering (*saṁsāra*). There are many classes of *devas*.

[47] Sanskrit *dharma* "doctrine, teachings." The *Dhamma*, as the liberating law discovered by the *Buddha*, is summed up in the Four Noble Truths. It forms one of the Three Gems (*tiratana*, that is, the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*) and one of the ten recollections (*anussati*): (1) the *Buddha*; (2) the *Dhamma*; (3) the *Sangha*; (4) morality; (5) generosity; (6) heavenly beings; (7) mindfulness on death; (8) mindfulness on the body; (9) mindfulness on breathing; and (10) the recollection of peace.

[48] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* 22:58; Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2005]), p. 414.

[49] Such as Koṇḍañña, Āḷāra Kālāma, Uddaka Rāmaputta, etc.

> *"For I am the Arahat in the world, the supreme teacher. I, alone, am a Fully Enlightened One, whose fires are quenched and extinguished."* [50]

During the early period of His renunciation, He sought guidance from several distinguished religious teachers of the day, but He could not find what He sought in their teachings. Circumstances compelled Him to rely on His own intuitive powers to search for the Truth. He sought the Truth within Himself. He plunged into the deepest profundities of thought, and He realized the ultimate Truth, which He had not known or heard before. Thus, illumination came from within and shed light on things that He had never seen before.

Inasmuch as He knew everything that ought to be known to attain Enlightenment, He is called *Sabbaññu*, "the Omniscient One."[51] He acquired this knowledge by His own efforts, continued through a countless series of births.

Who Is the Buddha?

Once, the *Buddha* was traveling along the road between Ukkaṭṭhā and Setavyā. A certain Brahmin named Doṇa happened to be traveling along the same road at the same time. Noticing the characteristic marks of the footprints of the *Buddha*, Doṇa thought to himself:

> "*This is wonderful, this is marvelous. Surely, these cannot be the footprints of a human being."*

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[50] *Majjhima Nikāya*, part I, Ariyapariyesanā Sutta, no. 26; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pāḷi Canon* (Seattle, WA: PBS Pariyatti Editions [3rd ed. 1992]), p. 40; Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2005]), p. 73.

[51] Quite contradictory views have been expressed by different Buddhist traditions on the exact nature and scope of the *Buddha's* omniscience (*sabbaññutā-ñāṇa*). According to the Theravādin School, the *Buddha's* principal claim was that He had broken the cycle of rebirth (*saṁsāra*) and that He had done this by overcoming any tendencies within Him towards greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). The proper test of the profundity of His realization, then, is not in asking Him obscure questions on topics about which He could not possibly be expected to have knowledge, but in examining His conduct for any evidence that He fell short of His claim. Indeed, this is a test that He Himself proposes for the assessment of a sage's attainment and so of his or her reliability as a teacher. The primary means of evaluating spiritual integrity, then, is to examine the ethical purity of the sage, not his or her magical powers (should he or she have any) nor the scope of his or her mundane knowledge. The *Buddha* may or may not have had all sorts of magical abilities, but these considerations should not obscure what is most fundamentally important about Him and what He realized.

The Buddha Himself categorically denied being omniscient. Those who declare Him to be omniscient, He says, "misrepresent me with what is untrue and contrary to fact" (*Majjhima Nikāya*, Tevijjavacchagotta Sutta, no. 71). In the same discourse, He goes on to explain that what He does possess is the "threefold true knowledge" (*tevijjā*): (1) recollection of manifold past lives, (2) the ability to see beings passing away and being reborn according to their deeds, and (3) direct knowledge of the destruction of the taints (*āsava*).

Then, the *Buddha* left the road and sat down, cross-legged, at the foot of a tree, with His body erect and with mindfulness established before Him. Doṇa, who was following the footprints, saw the Blessed One sitting at the foot of the tree. Thereupon, he approached the Blessed One and asked:

> *"Is Your Reverence a deva?"*
> *"No, indeed, Brahmin, I am not a deva."*
> *"Then, is Your Reverence a gandhabba?"*[52]
> *"No, indeed, Brahmin, I am not a gandhabba."*
> *"A yakkha*[53] *then?"*
> *"No, indeed, Brahmin, not a yakkha."*
> *"Then, is Your Reverence a human being?"*
> *"No, indeed, Brahmin, I am not a human being."*
> *"Who then, pray, are You?"*[54]

The *Buddha* replied that He had destroyed defilements that condition rebirth as a *deva*, *gandhabba*, *yakkha*, or a human being and added:

> *"As a lotus fair and lovely is not soiled by the water, I am not soiled by the world. Therefore, Brahmin, I am a Buddha."*

The *Buddha* did not claim to be an incarnation (*avatāra*) of the Hindu god Vishnu, who, as the *Bhagavadgitā* charmingly proclaims, is born again and again in different periods to protect the righteous, to destroy the wicked, and to establish the *Dharma* (the right way).[55]

According to the *Buddha*, countless are the gods (*devas*), who are also a class of beings subject to birth and death; but there is no one Supreme God who controls the destinies of human beings and who possesses a divine power to appear on earth at different intervals, employing a human form as a vehicle.

Nor does the *Buddha* call Himself a "Savior," who freely saves others by His personal salvation. The *Buddha* exhorts His followers to depend on themselves for their own liberation, since both defilement and purity depend on oneself. One cannot directly purify or defile another. Clarifying His relationship with His followers and emphasizing the importance of self-reliance and individual striving, the *Buddha* plainly states:

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[52] A *gandhabba* is a heavenly musician.
[53] A *yakkha* is a demon.
[54] *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:36; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pāḷi Canon* (Seattle, WA: PBS Pariyatti Editions [3rd ed. 1992]), pp. 187—188.
[55] Hindu teachers, however, with the objective of bringing the increasing number of adherents of Buddhism within the fold of Hinduism, have unjustly called the *Buddha* God's incarnation (*avatāra*), an idea that He repudiated in His own time.

"All the effort must be made by you; the Tathāgatas can only show the way."[56]

The *Buddha* only indicates the path and method whereby He delivered Himself from suffering and death and achieved His ultimate goal. It is the responsibility of His faithful followers to follow that path so that they, too, may find release from the ills of life. To depend on others for liberation leads nowhere — it means surrendering one's own effort. To depend on others is negative, but to depend upon oneself is positive.

"Therefore, Ānanda, you should live as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge."[57]

These significant words, uttered by the *Buddha* in His last days, are very striking and inspiring. They reveal how vital self-effort is to accomplish one's goal and how superficial and futile it is to seek liberation through the kindness of saviors and crave for illusory happiness in an afterlife through the propitiation of imaginary gods by fruitless prayers and meaningless sacrifices.

The *Buddha* was a human being. He was born as a man, He lived as a *Buddha*, and His life came to an end as a *Buddha*. Though human, He became an extraordinary man owing to His unique characteristics. The *Buddha* laid stress on this important point and left no room for anyone to fall into the error of thinking that He was an immortal being. It has been said of Him that there was no religious teacher who was "ever so godless as the *Buddha*, yet none so god-like."[58] In His own time, the *Buddha* was, no doubt, highly venerated by His followers, but He never arrogated any divinity to Himself.

The Buddha's Greatness

Born a man, living as a mortal, by His own efforts, He attained that supreme state of perfection called Buddhahood, and, without keeping His Enlightenment to Himself, He proclaimed to the world the latent possibilities and the invincible power of the human mind. Instead of placing an unseen Almighty God over man and giving man a subservient position in relation to such a conception of divine power, He demonstrated how man could attain the highest knowledge and Supreme Enlightenment by His own efforts. He thus raised the worth of man. He taught that man can gain liberation from the ills of life and realize the eternal bliss of *nibbāna* without depending upon an external God or mediating priests. He taught the egocentric, power-seeking world the noble ideal of selfless service. He protested against the evils of the caste system, which hampered the progress of mankind, and He advocated equal opportunities for all. He declared that

[56] The *Dhammapada*, XX, The Path, verse 276.
[57] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, no. 16; Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha According to the Pāḷi Canon* (Seattle, WA: PBS Pariyatti Editions [3rd ed. 1992]), p. 300.
[58] Dwight Goddard, *Buddhist Bible*, p. 20.

the path to liberation was open to all, in every condition of life, high or low, saint or sinner, who would care to turn over a new leaf and aspire to perfection. He raised the status of women, and not only brought them to a realization of their importance to society but also founded the first religious order for women. For the first time in the history of the world, He attempted to abolish slavery. He banned the sacrifice of animals and brought them within the scope of His loving-kindness. He did not force His followers to be slaves either to His Teachings or to Himself but granted them complete freedom of thought and admonished them not to accept His words merely out of respect for Him but only after subjecting the Teachings to a thorough examination "even as the wise would test gold by burning, cutting, and rubbing it on a piece of touchstone." He comforted bereaved mothers like Patācārā and Kisāgotamī by His consoling words. He ministered to the deserted sick like Putigatta Tissa Thera with His own hands. He helped the poor and the neglected like Rajjumālā and Sopāka and saved them from an untimely and tragic death. He ennobled the lives of criminals like Angulimāla and courtesans like Ambapālī. He encouraged the feeble, united those who were divided, enlightened the ignorant, clarified the mystic, guided the deluded, elevated the lowly, and dignified the noble. The rich and the poor, the saint and the criminal loved Him alike. His noble example was a source of inspiration to all. He was the most compassionate and tolerant of teachers.

His will, wisdom, compassion, service, renunciation, perfect purity, exemplary personal life, the blameless methods that were employed to propagate the *Dhamma*, and His final success — all these factors have compelled one fifth of the world to hail the *Buddha* as the greatest religious teacher who ever lived on earth. ■

4

After His Enlightenment

"Happy is this world of non-attachment."[59]

The Seven Weeks

In the memorable forenoon, immediately preceding the morn of His Enlightenment, while the Bodhisatta Gotama was seated under the Ajapāla banyan tree in close proximity to the *bodhi*-tree,[60] a generous lady, named Sujātā, unexpectedly offered Him some rich milk-rice, specially prepared by her with great care. He ate this nourishing meal and, after His Enlightenment, the *Buddha* fasted for seven weeks and spent a quiet time in deep contemplation under the *bodhi*-tree and in its neighborhood.

The First Week

Throughout the first week, the *Buddha* sat under the *bodhi*-tree in one posture experiencing the Bliss of Emancipation (*vimutti sukha*).[61]

After those seven days had elapsed, the *Buddha* emerged from the state of concentration and, during the first watch of the night, thoroughly reflected on "Dependent Origination" (*paṭicca samuppāda*) in direct order thus: "When this is, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises."

1. Dependent upon Ignorance (*avijjā*), moral and immoral Conditioning Activities (*saṁkhāra*) arise;
2. Dependent upon Conditioning Activities (*saṁkhāra*), (Relinking) Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arises;
3. Dependent upon Consciousness (*viññāṇa*), Mind and Matter (*nāma-rūpa*) arise;
4. Dependent upon Mind and Matter (*nāma-rūpa*), the Six Sense Faculties (*saḷāyatana*) arise;
5. Dependent upon the Six Sense Faculties (*saḷāyatana*), Contact (*phassa*) arises;

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[59] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Udāna*.

[60] The famous pipal tree at Bodhgaya in northern India which sheltered Him during His struggle for Enlightenment.

[61] That is, the Fruit of Arahantship.

6. Dependent upon Contact (*phassa*), Feeling (*vedanā*) arises;
7. Dependent upon Feeling (*vedanā*), Craving (*taṇhā*) arises;
8. Dependent upon Craving (*taṇhā*), Grasping (*upādāna*) arises;
9. Dependent upon Grasping (*upādāna*), Becoming (*bhava*) arises;
10. Dependent upon Becoming (*bhava*), Birth (*jāti*) arises;
11. Dependent upon Birth (*jāti*), Decay (*jarā*), Death (*maraṇa*), Sorrow (*soka*), Lamentation (*parideva*), Pain (*dukkha*), Grief (*domanassa*), and Despair (*upāyāsa*) arise.

Thus does this whole mass of suffering originate.

Thereupon, the Exalted One, knowing the meaning of this, uttered, at that time, this paean of joy:

> *"When, indeed, the truths become manifest to the strenuous, meditative Brāhmaṇa,*[62] *then do all his doubts vanish away, since he knows the truth together with its cause."*

During the middle watch of the night, the Exalted One thoroughly reflected on "Dependent Origination" (*paṭicca samuppāda*) in reverse order, thus: "When this is not, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases."

1. With the cessation of Ignorance (*avijjā*), moral and immoral Conditioning Activities (*saṁkhāra*) cease;
2. With the cessation of Conditioning Activities (*saṁkhāra*), (Relinking) Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) ceases;
3. With the cessation of Consciousness (*viññāṇa*), Mind and Matter (*nāma-rūpa*) cease;
4. With the cessation of Mind and Matter (*nāma-rūpa*), the Six Sense Faculties (*saḷāyatana*) cease;
5. With the cessation of the Six Sense Faculties (*saḷāyatana*), Contact (*phassa*) ceases;
6. With the cessation of Contact (*phassa*), Feeling (*vedanā*) ceases;
7. With the cessation of Feeling (*vedanā*), Craving (*taṇhā*) ceases;
8. With the cessation of Craving (*taṇhā*), Grasping (*upādāna*) ceases;
9. With the cessation of Grasping (*upādāna*), Becoming (*bhava*) ceases;
10. With the cessation of Becoming (*bhava*), Birth (*jāti*) ceases;
11. With the cessation of Birth (*jāti*), Decay (*jarā*), Death (*maraṇa*), Sorrow (*soka*), Lamentation (*parideva*), Pain (*dukkha*), Grief (*domanassa*), and Despair (*upāyāsa*) cease.

Thus does this whole mass of suffering cease.

[62] "Brahmin" is a term that means "one who studies the Vedas" — it is generally applied to the Priestly Caste, the highest of the four castes (*vaṇṇa*). Sometimes, the *Buddha* uses this term in the sense "one who has discarded evil," "a Saint." In this book, "*brāhmaṇa*" is used to denote a Saint, and "Brahmin" to denote a member of the Priestly Caste.

Thereupon, the Exalted One, knowing the meaning of this, uttered, for the second time, this paean of joy:

> *"When, indeed, the truths become manifest to the strenuous, meditative brāhmaṇa, then do all his doubts vanish away, since he knows the truth together with its cause."*

During the third watch of the night, the Exalted One reflected on "Dependent Origination" both in direct and reverse order, thus: "When this is, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this is not, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases." Thus does this whole mass of suffering arise, and thus does it cease.

Thereupon, the Exalted One, knowing the meaning of this, uttered, for the third time, this paean of joy:

> *"When, indeed, the truths become manifest to the strenuous, meditative brāhmaṇa, then do all his doubts vanish away, since he knows the truth together with its cause."*

Second Week

The second week was uneventful, but the *Buddha* silently taught a great moral lesson to the world. As a mark of profound gratitude to the inanimate *bodhi*-tree that had sheltered Him during His struggle for Enlightenment, He stood at a certain distance gazing at the tree with motionless eyes for one whole week.[63]

Following His noble example, His followers, in memory of His Enlightenment, still venerate not only the original *bodhi*-tree but also its descendants.[64]

Third Week

Inasmuch as the *Buddha* had not given up His temporary residence under the *bodhi*-tree, the *devas* doubted His attainment of Buddhahood. The *Buddha* read their thoughts, and, in order to clear away their doubts, He used His psychic powers to create a jeweled ambulatory (*ratana caṁkamana*) and paced back and forth for another week.

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[63] On the spot where the *Buddha* stood, a *cetiya* (a type of sepulchral monument, a *stūpa*) was erected by King Asoka. This was named Animisalocana Cetiya and can still be seen.

[64] The right-hand branch of the original *bodhi*-tree was brought to Śri Lanka (Ceylon) by Sanghamittā Therī and planted by King Devānampiyatissa at Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Śri Lanka. It still exists in flourishing condition, even though it is more than 2,000 years old.

Fourth Week

The *Buddha* spent the fourth week in a jeweled chamber (*ratanaghara*[65]) contemplating the intricacies of the *Abhidhamma* (Higher Teaching). Books state that His mind and body were so purified when He pondered on the Book of Relations (*Paṭṭhāna*), the seventh treatise of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, that six colored rays emitted from His body.[66]

Fifth Week

During the fifth week too, the *Buddha* enjoyed the Bliss of Emancipation (*vimuttisukha*), seated in one posture under the famous Ajapāla banyan tree in the vicinity of the *bodhi*-tree. When He arose from that transcendental state, a conceited Brahmin approached Him and, after the customary salutations and friendly greetings, questioned Him thus:

> *"In what respect, O Venerable Gotama, does one become a brāhmaṇa and what are the conditions that make a brāhmaṇa?"*

The *Buddha* uttered this paean of joy in reply:

> *"That Brahmin who has discarded evil, who is without conceit, who is free from Defilements, who is self-controlled, who is versed in knowledge, and who has led the Holy Life rightly, would call himself a brāhmaṇa. For him, there is no elation anywhere in this world."*[67]

According to the *Jātaka* Commentary, it was during this week that the daughters of Māra, Taṇhā, Aratī, and Rāgā,[68] made a vain attempt to tempt the *Buddha* by their charms.

Sixth Week

From the Ajapāla banyan tree, the *Buddha* proceeded to the Mucalinda tree, where He spent the sixth week, again enjoying the Bliss of Emancipation. At that time, there arose an unexpected great shower. Rain clouds and gloomy weather with cold winds prevailed for several days. Thereupon, Mucalinda, the serpent-king, came out of

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[65] So called because the *Buddha* reflected on the jewels of the *Abhidhamma*.
[66] Namely, blue (*nīla*), yellow (*pīta*), red (*lohita*), white (*odāta*), orange (*mañjettha*), and a mixture of these five colors (*pabhassara*).
[67] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Udāna*.
[68] These three cannot have been personified passions since the incident took place after the Enlightenment.

his abode and, coiling around the *Buddha* seven times, remained, keeping his large hood over the head of the *Buddha* so that He might not be affected by the elements.

At the close of seven days, Mucalinda, seeing the clear, cloudless sky, uncoiled himself from around the body of the *Buddha*, took on the guise of a young man, and stood in front of the Exalted One with clasped hands. Thereupon, the *Buddha* uttered this paean of joy:

> *"Happy is seclusion to him who is contented, to him who has heard the Truth, and to him who sees. Happy is goodwill in this world, and so is restraint towards all beings. Happy in this world is non-attachment, the passing beyond of sensory desires. The suppression of ego conceitedness is, indeed, the highest happiness."*[69]

Seventh Week

The *Buddha* peacefully passed the seventh week at the Rājāyatana tree, experiencing the Bliss of Emancipation.

One of the First Utterances of the Buddha[70]

> *"I have gone through many rounds of birth and death, seeking, but not finding, the builder of this house.*[71] *Sorrowful, indeed, is birth and death again and again! But now I have seen you, Oh house-builder; you shall not build this house [for me] again — its rafters are broken; its ridgepole is shattered. My mind has reached the unconditioned; the end of craving*[72] *has been attained."*[73]

At dawn, on the very day of His Enlightenment, the *Buddha* uttered this paean of joy (*udāna*), which vividly describes His transcendental moral victory and His inner spiritual experience.

Here, the *Buddha* acknowledges His past wanderings in *saṁsāra*, which entailed suffering (*dukkha*), a fact that clearly proves His belief in rebirth. He was compelled to wander and, consequently, to suffer, inasmuch as He could not discover the carpenter who built this house, the body (*kāya*). In His final birth, while engaged in solitary

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[69] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Udāna*.

[70] This famous paean of joy only appears in the *Dhammapada*, XI, Old Age, verses 153—155.

[71] The "house" is the body, the "house-builder" is craving (*taṇhā*). "Seeking, but not finding," means failing to attain Enlightenment.

[72] The Fruit of Arahatship.

[73] These verses are the expressions (paeans) of the intense and sublime joy that the *Buddha* felt at the moment He attained Enlightenment. As such, they are replete with a wealth of sublime meaning and deep feeling. They are repeated here as Venerable Ānanda heard them from the mouth of the *Buddha* Himself.

meditation, which He had developed in the course of His wanderings, after a relentless search, He discovered the builder of the house, residing not outside but within the recesses of His own mind. It was craving (*taṇhā*), or attachment (*upādāna*), a self-creation, a mental element latent in all. How and when this craving originated is unknowable, but, what is created by oneself, can be destroyed by oneself. The discovery of the builder of the house is the eradication of craving by attaining Arahantship, which, in these verses, is alluded to as "the end of craving."

The rafters of this self-created house are the defilements (*kilesa*), such as: (1) greed (*lobha*), or attachment; (2) hatred, or aversion (*dosa*); (3) delusion (*moha*); (4) conceit (*māna*); (5) false views (*diṭṭhi*, or *micchā-diṭṭhi*); (6) skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*); (7) lethargy, depression, drowsiness (*thīna*); (8) restlessness, worry, agitation (*uddhacca*); (9) moral shamelessness (*ahirika*); and (10) lack of moral dread, or unconscientiousness (*anottappa*). The ridgepole that supports the rafters represents ignorance (*avijjā*), the root cause of all defilements. The shattering of the ridgepole of ignorance by wisdom (*paññā*) results in the complete demolition of the house. The ridgepole and rafters are the material with which the carpenter builds this undesired house. With their destruction, the carpenter is deprived of the material to rebuild the undesired house.

With the demolition of the house, the mind, for which there is no place in the analogy, attains the unconditioned state, which is *nibbāna*. Whatever is mundane is left behind, and only the Supramundane State, *nibbāna*, remains. ■

5

The Invitation to Expound the Dhamma

> *"Those who imbibe the Dhamma live in joy with a serene mind. The wise take delight in the Dhamma expounded by the Noble Ones."*[74]

The Dhamma as the Teacher

On one occasion soon after His Enlightenment, the *Buddha* was dwelling at the foot of the Ajapāla banyan tree on the bank of the Nerañjarā river. While He was engaged in solitary meditation, the following thought arose in His mind:

> *"Painful, indeed, is it to live without someone to pay reverence to and to show deference to. What if I should live near an ascetic or Brahmin respecting and showing reverence to him."*[75]

Then it occurred to Him:

> *"Should I live near another ascetic or Brahmin, respecting and paying reverence to him, in order to bring morality to perfection? But I do not see in this world, including gods, māras, and brahmās, and among beings, including ascetics, Brahmins, gods, and men, another ascetic or Brahmin who is superior to me in morality and with whom I could associate, respecting and paying reverence to him.*
>
> *"Should I live near another ascetic or Brahmin, respecting and paying reverence to him, in order to bring concentration to perfection? But I do not see in this world any ascetic or Brahmin who is superior to me in concentration and with whom I could associate, respecting and paying reverence to him.*
>
> *"Should I live near another ascetic or Brahmin, respecting and paying reverence to him, in order to bring wisdom to perfection? But I do not see in this world any ascetic or Brahmin who is superior to me in wisdom and with whom I could associate, respecting and paying reverence to him.*
>
> *"Should I live near another ascetic or Brahmin, respecting and paying reverence to him, in order to bring emancipation to perfection? But I do not see*

[74] *Dhammapada*, VI, The Wise, verse 79.
[75] *Anguttara Nikāya*, part II.

> *in this world any ascetic or Brahmin who is superior to me in emancipation and with whom I could associate, respecting and paying reverence to him."*

Then, the thought occurred to Him*:*

> *"What if I should live respecting and paying reverence to this very Dhamma that I have myself realized?"*

Thereupon, Brahmā Sahampati, understanding with his own mind the *Buddha's* thought, just as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm, even so did he vanish from the *brahmā* realm and appear before the *Buddha*. Thereupon, covering one shoulder with his upper robe and placing his right knee on the ground, he saluted the *Buddha* with clasped hands and said thus:

> *"It is so, O Exalted One! It is so, O Accomplished One! O Lord, the worthy, fully Enlightened Ones who were in the past did, indeed, live respecting and paying reverence to this very Dhamma. The worthy, fully Enlightened Ones who will live in the future will also live respecting and paying reverence to this very Dhamma. O Lord, may the Exalted One, the worthy, supremely Enlightened One of the present age also live respecting and paying reverence to this very Dhamma."*

The Brahmā Sahampati continued:

> *"Those Enlightened Ones of the past, those of the future, and those of the present age, who dispel the suffering of the many, all of them lived, will live, and are living respecting the noble Dhamma. This is the characteristic of the Buddhas. Therefore, he who desires his welfare and expects his greatness should certainly respect the noble Dhamma, remembering the message of the Buddhas."*

This is what the Brahmā Sahampati said, after which he respectfully saluted the *Buddha* and, passing around Him to the right, disappeared immediately.

Inasmuch as the *Sangha* is also endowed with greatness, the *Buddha* also paid reverence to the *Sangha*.[76]

The Invitation to Expound the Dhamma

From the foot of the Rājāyatana tree, the *Buddha* proceeded to the Ajapāla banyan tree, and, while He was absorbed in solitary meditation, the following thought occurred to Him:

[76] This discourse was delivered by the *Buddha* while residing at Jetavana (the grove [*vana*] of Prince Jeta, which Anāthapiṇḍika had bought for the use of the *Buddha* and His disciples), Sāvatthī, long after the Order of the *Sangha* had been established. He showed His reverence toward the *Sangha* by requesting Queen Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī to offer the robe specially prepared for Him.

> *"This Dhamma that I have realized is indeed profound, difficult to perceive, difficult to comprehend, tranquil, exalted, not within the sphere of logic, subtle, and is to be understood only by the wise. These beings are attached to material pleasures. This causally connected 'Dependent Origination' is a subject that is difficult to comprehend. And this nibbāna — the cessation of the conditioned, the abandoning of all defilements, the destruction of craving, the non-attachment, and the cessation — is also not an easy matter to comprehend. If I, too, were to teach this Dhamma, no one would understand me. That would be wearisome to me, that would be tiresome to me."*

Then, these wonderful verses, not heard before, occurred to the *Buddha*:

> *"With difficulty have I comprehended the Dhamma. There is no need to proclaim it now. This Dhamma is not easy to understand by those who are dominated by lust and hatred. Those who are lust-ridden, shrouded in darkness, do not see this Dhamma, which goes against the stream, which is abstruse, profound, difficult to perceive, and subtle."*

As the *Buddha* reflected thus, He was not disposed to expound the *Dhamma*. Thereupon, Brahmā Sahampati read the thoughts of the *Buddha*, and, fearing that the world might perish through not hearing the *Dhamma*, approached Him and invited Him to teach the *Dhamma*, thus:

> *"O Lord, may the Exalted One expound the Dhamma! May the Accomplished One expound the Dhamma! There are beings with little dust in their eyes, who, not hearing the Dhamma, will perish. There are those who will understand the Dhamma."*

Furthermore, he remarked:

> *"In ancient times, there arose in Magadha a Dhamma that was impure, thought out by the corrupted. Open this door to the Deathless State. May they now hear the Dhamma understood by the Stainless One! Just as one standing on the summit of a rocky mountain would behold the people around, even so may the All-Seeing, Wise One ascend to the palace of the Dhamma! May the Sorrowless One behold the people who are plunged in grief and are overcome by birth and decay!"*

When he said so, the Exalted One spoke to him thus:

> *"The following thought, O Brahmā, occurred to me: 'This Dhamma that I have comprehended is not easy to understand by those who are dominated by lust and hatred. Those who are lust-ridden, shrouded in darkness, do not see this*

Dhamma, which goes against the stream, which is abstruse, profound, difficult to perceive, and subtle.' As I reflected thus, my mind turned to inaction and not to the teaching of the Dhamma."

Brahmā Sahampati appealed to the *Buddha* for a second time, and the *Buddha* gave the same reply.

When he appealed to the *Buddha* for the third time, the Exalted One, out of pity for beings, surveyed the world with His *Buddha*-Vision. As He surveyed thus, He saw beings with little and much dust in their eyes, with keen and dull intellect, with good and bad characteristics, beings who are easy and beings who are difficult to teach, and a few others who, with fear, view evil and a life beyond.

"As in the case of a blue, red, or white lotus pond, some lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water, remain immersed in the water, and thrive plunged in the water; some are born in the water, grow in the water, and remain on the surface of the water; some others are born in the water, grow in the water, and remain emerging out of the water, unstained by the water. Even so, as the Exalted One surveyed the world with His Buddha-Vision, He saw beings with little and much dust in their eyes, with keen and dull intellect, with good and bad characteristics, beings who are easy and beings who are difficult to teach, and a few others who, with fear, view evil and a life beyond."

Thereupon, He addressed the Brahmā Sahampati in a verse, thus:

"The doors to the Deathless State are open to them. Let those who have ears repose in confidence. Being aware of the weariness, O Brahmā, I did not teach this glorious and excellent Dhamma among men."

The delighted Brahmā, thinking that he had made the occasion for the Exalted One to expound the *Dhamma*, respectfully saluted Him and, passing around Him to the right, immediately disappeared.[77]

The First Two Converts

After His memorable fast of forty-nine days, as the *Buddha* sat under the Rājāyatana tree, two merchants, Tapassu and Bhallika, from Ukkala (Orissa), happened to pass that way. Then, a certain deity,[78] who was a blood-relative of theirs in a past birth, spoke to them as follows:

[77] See *Majjhima Nikāya*, Ariyapariyesana Sutta, no. 26.

[78] Pāḷi *devatā*. *Devatās* are terrestrial or celestial deities, a class of beings who, as a rule, are invisible to humans. This particular feminine deity had been related to the merchants in a previous birth. It is

"The Exalted One, good sirs, is dwelling at the foot of the Rājāyatana tree, having just attained Enlightenment. Go and serve the Exalted One with rice cake and honey-comb.[79] *It will lead to your well-being and happiness for a long time."*

Availing themselves of this golden opportunity, the two delighted merchants went to the Exalted One, bearing rice cake and honey-comb. Then, respectfully saluting Him, they implored Him to accept their humble alms so that it might lead to their happiness and well-being.

Thereupon, it occurred to the Exalted One:

"The Tathāgatas do not accept food with their hands. How shall I accept this rice cake and honey-comb?"

Forthwith, the four Great Kings[80] understood the thoughts of the Exalted One with their minds and, from the four directions, offered Him four granite bowls[81] saying: "O Lord, may the Exalted One accept herewith this rice cake and honey-comb."

The *Buddha* graciously accepted this timely gift, with which He received the humble offering of the merchants and ate this food after His long fast.

After the meal was over, the merchants prostrated themselves before the feet of the *Buddha* and said:

"We, O Lord, seek refuge in the Exalted One and the Dhamma. May the Exalted One count us as lay disciples who have gone to Him for refuge from today onward, for as long as life lasts."[82]

These were the first lay disciples of the *Buddha*,[83] who embraced Buddhism by seeking refuge in the *Buddha* and the *Dhamma*, reciting the twofold formula.

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interesting to note the non-human element appearing in various places connected with the life of the *Buddha*.

[79] *Sattu*, "fried flour; rice cake," and *madhu*, "honey(-comb)," were a regular diet of travelers in India in ancient times.

[80] *Cātummahārājikas*, the Guardian Deities of the four quarters (*catuddisā*). They inhabit the lowest of the six celestial realms (*cātummahārājiko devaloko*).

[81] The Commentary states that the *Buddha* wished that the four bowls be combined into one.

[82] *Buddhaṁ saranaṁ gacchāmi* "I go to the *Buddha* for refuge," *Dhammaṁ saranaṁ gacchāmi* "I go to the Dhamma for refuge," is the twofold formula. Since the *Sangha*, or Noble Order, had not yet been established, the merchants did not recite the third formula — *Saṅghaṁ saranaṁ gacchāmi* "I go to the *Sangha* for refuge." One becomes a Buddhist by intelligently reciting the Three Refuges.

[83] The *Jātaka* Commentary states that, when these two first converts begged the *Buddha* to give them an object of worship, the *Buddha* touched His head and gave them some hair relics. It is believed that these relics have been enshrined in the modern Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon, Burma (Myanmar), the pride and glory of Burmese Buddhists. This massive, bell-shaped *Cetiya* appears like a golden mountain from a distance.

On the Way to Benares to Teach the Dhamma

On accepting the invitation to teach the *Dhamma*, the first thought that occurred to the *Buddha* before He embarked on His great mission was:

> *"To whom shall I teach the Dhamma first? Who will understand the Dhamma quickly? Well, there is Āḷāra Kālāma,*[84] *who is learned, clever, wise, and has, for long, been with little dust in his eyes. What if I were to teach the Dhamma to him first? He will understand the Dhamma quickly."*

Then, a deity appeared before the *Buddha* and said: "Lord! Āḷāra Kālāma died a week ago." With His supernormal vision, the *Buddha* perceived that it was so. Then He thought of Uddaka Rāmaputta.[85] Instantly, a deity informed Him that Uddaka Rāmaputta had died the evening before. With His supernormal vision, the *Buddha* perceived that it was so.

Ultimately, the *Buddha* thought of the five energetic ascetics who had attended on Him during His struggle for Enlightenment. With His supernormal vision, He perceived that they were residing in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares. So, the *Buddha* stayed at Uruvelā till such time as He was ready to set out for Benares.

While the *Buddha* was traveling from Uruvelā to Benares, a wandering ascetic named Upaka saw Him and asked:

> *"Your senses are extremely clear, O friend! Your complexion is pure and clean! On whose account has your renunciation been made, friend? Who is your teacher? Whose doctrine do you profess?"*

The *Buddha* replied:

> *"All have I overcome, all do I know. From all am I detached, all have I renounced. Wholly absorbed am I in the destruction of craving [Arahantship]. Having comprehended all by myself, whom shall I call my teacher? I have no teacher.*[86] *There is no one who is my equal. In this world, including gods, there is no one who can rival me. Indeed, I am an Arahant in this world. I am an unsurpassed teacher; alone am I the Fully Enlightened One. I am cool and appeased. I go to the city of Kāsi to establish the wheel of Dhamma. In this blind world, I shall beat the drum of Deathlessness."*

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[84] Āḷāra Kālāma was His first religious teacher, who taught the Ascetic Gotama the *jhānas* up to the Realm of Nothingness (*akiñcaññāyatana*).

[85] Uddaka Rāmaputta was His second teacher, who taught the Ascetic Gotama the highest state of mundane mental development, The Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-perception (*n'eva saññā n'āsaññāyatana*).

[86] The *Buddha* uttered these words because He attained Enlightenment without the aid of a teacher. He had teachers before His Enlightenment, but nobody taught Him the way to attain Buddhahood. It is, therefore, not correct to say that Buddhism is a natural outgrowth of Hinduism.

Upaka then asked:

> *"Then, friend, do you admit that you are an Arahant, a limitless Conqueror?"*

To which the *Buddha* replied:

> *"Like me are conquerors who have achieved the destruction of defilements. I have conquered all the evil conditions. Hence, Upaka, I am called a Conqueror."*

"It may be so, friend," Upaka curtly remarked, and, nodding his head, turned onto a by-road and departed.

Unperturbed by this first rebuff, the *Buddha* journeyed from place to place and, in due course, arrived at the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares.

Meeting the Five Ascetics

The five ascetics saw the *Buddha* coming from afar and decided not to pay Him due respect, since they misconstrued His discontinuance of rigid ascetic practices, which had proved utterly futile during His struggle for Enlightenment. They remarked among themselves:

> *"Friends, that Ascetic Gotama is coming. He is luxurious. He has given up striving and has turned to a life of abundance. He should not be greeted and waited upon. His bowl and robe should not be taken. Nevertheless, a seat should be prepared. If He wishes, let Him sit down."*

However, as the *Buddha* continued to come closer, His august personality was such that they felt compelled to receive Him with due honor. One of them came forward and took His bowl and robe, another prepared a seat, and yet another kept water for His feet. Nevertheless, they addressed Him by name and called Him "friend" (*āvuso*), a form of address applied generally to juniors and equals. Thereupon, the *Buddha* addressed them thus:

> *"Do not, O Bhikkhus, address the Tathāgata by name or by the title 'āvuso.' An Exalted One, O Bhikkhus, is the Tathāgata. A Fully Enlightened One is He. Listen carefully, O Bhikkhus! Deathlessness has been attained. I shall instruct and teach the Dhamma. If you act according to my instructions, before long, you will realize, by your own intuitive wisdom, and live, attaining in this life itself, that supreme consummation of the Holy Life, for the sake of which sons of noble families rightly leave the household life for homelessness."*

Thereupon, the five ascetics replied:

> *"By that demeanor of yours, āvuso Gotama, by that discipline, by those painful austerities, you did not attain to any superhuman specific knowledge and insight worthy of a Noble One. How is it that you could gain any such superhuman specific knowledge and insight worthy of a Noble One when you have become luxurious and have turned to a life of abundance?"*

In explanation, the *Buddha* answered:

> *"The Tathāgata, O Bhikkhus, is not luxurious, has not given up striving, and has not turned to a life of abundance. The Tathāgata is an Exalted One. He is a Fully Enlightened One. Listen carefully, O Bhikkhus! Deathlessness has been attained. I shall instruct and teach the Dhamma. If you act according to my instructions, before long, you will realize, by your own intuitive wisdom, and live, attaining in this life itself, that supreme consummation of the Holy Life for the sake of which sons of noble families rightly leave the household life for homelessness."*

For a second time, the close-minded ascetics expressed their disappointment in the same manner. For a second time, the *Buddha* reassured them of His attainment of Enlightenment. When the adamant ascetics expressed their refusal to believe Him for a third time, the *Buddha* questioned them thus: "Do you know, O *Bhikkhus*, when I ever spoke to you in this way before?" "Nay, indeed, Lord," they replied.

The *Buddha* then repeated, once again, that He had gained Enlightenment and that they also could realize the Truth if they would act according to His instructions.

It was indeed a frank utterance, issuing from the sacred lips of the *Buddha*. The cultured ascetics, though adamant in their views, were, thereupon, fully convinced of the great achievement of the *Buddha* and of His competence to act as their moral guide and teacher. They believed His word and sat in silence to listen to His noble teaching.

The *Buddha* instructed two of the ascetics, while the remaining three went out for alms. With what the three ascetics brought back from their alms-round, all six maintained themselves. Then, the *Buddha* instructed the other three ascetics, while two went out for alms. With what the two brought back, all six maintained themselves.

And, before long, those five ascetics, thus admonished and instructed by the *Buddha*, being themselves subject to birth, decay, disease, death, sorrow, and defilements, realized the true nature of life and, seeking out the birthless, decayless, diseaseless, deathless, sorrowless, defilementless, incomparable Supreme Peace, *nibbāna*, attained the incomparable security, *nibbāna*, which is free from birth, decay, disease, death, sorrow, and defilements. The knowledge arose in them that their Deliverance was unshakable, that it was their last birth, and that there would be no more of this state again.

The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta,[87] which deals with the Four Noble Truths, was the first discourse delivered by the *Buddha* to the five ascetics. Hearing it,

[87] This *sutta* is discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Koṇḍañña, the eldest, attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*[88]). After receiving further instruction, the other four attained *Sotāpanna* later. On hearing the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta,[89] which deals with soullessness, all five attained Arahantship,[90] the final stage of Sainthood.

The First Five Disciples

The five learned ascetics, who thus attained Arahantship and became the *Buddha's* first ordained disciples, were Koṇḍañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, and Assaji — all belonged to the Brahmin Caste.

Koṇḍañña was the youngest and the most clever of the eight Brahmins who were summoned by King Suddhodana to the naming ceremony for the infant prince. The remaining four were sons of the other Brahmins. All five of them retired to the forest as ascetics in anticipation, while the *Bodhisatta* was striving to attain Buddhahood. When He gave up His useless penances and severe austerities and began to nourish His body sparingly to regain His lost strength, these favorite followers, disappointed at the change of method, deserted Him and went to Isipatana. Soon after their departure, the *Bodhisatta* attained Buddhahood.

The venerable Koṇḍañña became the first Arahant and the most senior member of the *Sangha*. It was Assaji, one of the five, who converted the great Sāriputta, the chief disciple of the *Buddha*. ■

[88] Literally, "Stream-Winner."
[89] This was the second discourse delivered by the *Buddha* after attaining Enlightenment. See Chapter 6.
[90] *Arahant* means "Foe-Destroyer," "Worthy One."

6

Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: The First Discourse

"Of paths, the Eightfold[91] *is the best; of truths, the Noble Four*[92] *are best; of mental states, detachment*[93] *is the best; of human beings, the All-Seeing One is best."*[94] [95]

Introduction

When Prince Siddhattha was born, Indian civilization was already old. Perhaps fifteen hundred years (or more) had passed since wandering Aryan tribes from Central Asia, entering the Indian subcontinent along the Indus River, had found a civilization already a thousand years old,[96] in which the defining features of the Hindu faith seem to have already been established.

The Aryans brought with them a social order presided over by priests, or Brahmins, the trustees of ancient hymns, rituals, and deities related to those of other lands, especially Persia (modern-day Iran), where Aryan tribes had also spread. India seems to have dealt with this new religion as it has dealt with cultural imports ever since — it absorbed the new into the old. As a result, in even the earliest of the Indian scriptures — the Rig Veda, whose oldest hymns go back at least to 1500 BCE —, we find Aryan nature gods integrated with the loftiest conceptions of mysticism. There is no inconsistency in this integration, only a very early recognition that life's supreme reality can be described in many ways. "Truth is one," says a hymn of the Rig Veda; "the wise call it by different names."

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[91] The Noble Eightfold Path consists of: (1) Right Understanding; (2) Right Intentions (or Right Thought); (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Action; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Mindfulness; and (8) Right Concentration.

[92] The Four Noble Truths are (1) Suffering (*dukkha*); (2) the Origin of Suffering (*samudaya*); (3) the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha*); and (4) the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering (*magga*), which is the Noble Eightfold Path. For more information, cf. Chapter 19.

[93] *Virāga* "detachment, non-attachment" = *nibbāna*.

[94] *Cakkhumā* "All-Seeing One" = the *Buddha*.

[95] *Dhammapada*, XX, The Path, verse 273.

[96] The oldest Indian civilization — the co-called "Indus Valley" or "Harappan" Civilization — flourished from about 2500 BCE to 1700 BCE, though its beginnings go back even further.

From the beginning, then, two subcurrents ran through the broad river of the Vedic faith. One, followed by the vast majority of people, was the social religion of the Vedas, with Brahmins in charge of preserving the ancient scriptures and presiding over a complex set of rituals. But another tradition, at least as ancient, taught that, beyond ritual and the mediation of priests, it is possible, through the practice of spiritual disciplines, to realize directly the divine ground of life. This ideal is sanctioned in Vedic religion as the human being's highest vocation. The opportunity is open to anyone to wrap up social obligations and retire to an ashram in the Himalayas or in the forests flanking the Ganges to learn from an illumined teacher how to realize truth. This choice is often misunderstood as world-weariness, and we know that, even in those most ancient times, India had ascetics who tortured their bodies in the desire to free their spirit. But this is not India's classical tradition, and the typical ashram of the times was a retreat where students would live with an illumined teacher as one of his followers, leading a life of outward simplicity in order to concentrate on inner growth.

Sometimes, graduates of these forest academies would go on to become teachers themselves. But it was at least as likely that they would return to society, disciplined in body and mind, to make a contribution to some secular field. Some, according to legend, became counselors of kings; one actually was a king. These men and women turned inward for the same reason that scientists and adventurers turn outward — not to run from life, but to master it. They went into the forests of the Ganges to find the truth as a poet turns to poetry or a musician to music, because they loved life so intensely that nothing would do but to grasp it at the heart. They yearned to *know* — to know what the human being is, what life is, what death means and whether it can be conquered.

Oral records of their discoveries began to be collected around 1000 BCE or even earlier, in fragments called the *Upanishads*. Individualistic in their expression, yet completely universal, these ecstatic documents belong to no particular religion but to all mankind. They are not systematic philosophy; indeed, they are not philosophy at all. Each *Upanishad* contains the record of a *darśana*, literally, "something seen," a view not of the world of everyday experience but of the deep, still realms beneath the sense-world, accessible in deep meditation.

Born in freedom and stamped with the joy of self-realization, these early testaments of the Vedic sages are clear predecessors of the *Buddha's* voice. They contain no trace of world denial, no shadow of fear, no sense of diffidence about our place in an alien universe. Far from deprecating physical existence, they teach that self-realization means health, vitality, long life, and a harmonious balance of inward and outward activity. With a triumphant voice, they proclaim that human destiny lies ultimately in human hands for those who master the passions of the mind.

And they insist on *knowing*, not the learning of facts but the direct experience of truth — the one reality underlying life's diversity. This is not an intellectual achievement. Knowledge means realization. To know the truth, one must make it real, must live it out in thought, word, and deed.

The method these sages followed in their pursuit of truth was called *brahmavidyā*, the "supreme science," a discipline in which attention is focused intensely on the contents

of consciousness. In practice, this means meditation. The modern mind balks at calling meditation scientific, but, in these sages' passion for truth, in their search for reality as something that is the same under all conditions and from all points of view, in their insistence on direct observation and systematic empirical method, we find the essence of the scientific spirit. It is not improper to call *brahmavidyā* a series of experiments — on the mind, by the mind — with predictable, replicable results.

Yet, of course, the sages of the *Upanishads* took a different track from conventional science. They looked not at the world outside, but at human knowledge of the world inside. They sought invariants in the contents of consciousness and discarded everything impermanent as ultimately unreal, in the way that the sensations of a dream are seen to be unreal when one awakens. Their principle was "this is not the self; that is not the self." They peeled away personality like an onion, layer by layer, and found nothing permanent in the mass of perceptions, thoughts, emotions, drives, and memories that we call "I," "me," or "mine." Yet, when everything individual was stripped away, an intense awareness remained — consciousness itself. The sages called this ultimate ground of personality *ātman,* the "Self."

The scientific temper of this method is a vital part of the *Buddha's* background. If, as Aldous Huxley observed, science is "the reduction of multiplicities to unities," no civilization has been more scientific. From the Rig Veda on, India's scriptures are steeped in the conviction of an all-pervasive order (*ṛtam*) in the whole of creation that is reflected in each part. In medieval Europe, it was the realization that there cannot be one set of natural laws governing earth and another set governing the heavens that led to the birth of classical physics. In a similar insight, Vedic India conceived of the natural world — not only physical phenomena but human action and thought — as uniformly governed by universal law. [97]

As can be seen from the preceding description, ancient India was noted for its distinguished philosophers and religious teachers, who held diverse views regarding life and its goal. The names of some of these teachers, along with their views, are mentioned in the Pāḷi scriptures. The Brahmajāla Sutta[98] of the *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions sixty-two varieties of philosophical theories that were prevalent at the time of the *Buddha*.

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[97] The beginning parts of this chapter are adapted from the Introduction to the *Dhammapada* by Eknath Easwaran (2nd edition: Petaluma, CA: Nilgiri Press [2007]).

[98] In the Brahmajāla Sutta (The Supreme Net — What the Teaching is Not), the *Bhikkhus* observe the ascetic Suppiya arguing with one of his pupils about the merits of the *Buddha*, His Teachings (*Dhamma*), and His Holy Order (*Sangha*). The *Buddha* tells the *Bhikkhus* not to be affected by either praise or criticism of His Teachings and declares that the "worldling" (*puthujjana*) will praise Him for superficial reasons and not for the essence of His Teachings. He then lists sixty-two different types of wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*) prevalent at the time, all of which are based on contact of the six sense-bases and their objects. Contact conditions craving, which, in turn, leads to clinging, to (re)becoming, to birth, to ageing and death, and to all manner of suffering. But the *Tathāgata* (the *Buddha*) has gone beyond these things, and all sixty-two wrong views are trapped in His net. In the present age, wrong view would include any religious, philosophical, or political system that supports or promotes violence, ill will, or bigotry, in any form whatsoever, as well as any other corrupt, false, or evil doctrine (such as eternalism, nihilism, annihilationism, hedonism, etc.).

One extreme view, which was diametrically opposed to all current religious belief, was the nihilistic teaching of the materialists, who were called "*Cārvākas*" after the name of their founder.

According to the views of ancient materialism, which was known as *lokāyata* in Pāḷi and Sanskrit, man is annihilated after death, leaving behind whatever force was generated by him. In their opinion, death is the end of all. This present world alone is real. "Eat, drink, and be merry, for death comes to all," appears to be the ideal of their system. "Virtue," they say, "is a delusion, and enjoyment is the only reality. Religion is a foolish aberration, a mental disease. There was a distrust of everything good, high, pure and compassionate. Their theory stands for sensualism and selfishness and the gross affirmation of the loud will. There is no need to control passion and instinct, since they are nature's legacy to men."[99]

Another extreme view was that liberation was possible only by leading a life of strict asceticism. This was purely a religious doctrine, firmly held by ascetics of the highest order. The five ascetics who attended on the *Bodhisatta* during His struggle for Enlightenment tenaciously adhered to this belief. In accordance with this view, the *Buddha*, too, before His Enlightenment, subjected Himself to all forms of austerity. After an extraordinary struggle for six years, He realized the utter futility of self-mortification. Consequently, He changed this unsuccessful approach and adopted a middle way. His favorite disciples thus lost confidence in Him and deserted Him, saying: "The Ascetic Gotama has become luxurious, has ceased from striving, and has returned to a life of comfort."

Their unexpected departure was definitely a material loss to Him, since they had ministered to all His needs. Nevertheless, He was not discouraged. The iron-willed *Bodhisatta* probably must have felt happy to be left alone. With unabated enthusiasm and with restored energy, He persistently strove until He attained Enlightenment, the goal of His life.

Precisely two months after His Enlightenment, on the *Āsālha* (July) full moon day, the *Buddha* delivered His first discourse to the five ascetics who had attended on Him.

The First Discourse of the Buddha

"*Dhammacakka*" is the name given to the first discourse of the *Buddha*. It is frequently represented as meaning "The Wheel of Truth" or "The Wheel of Wisdom." According to the commentators, *Dhamma* here means "wisdom" or "knowledge," and *cakka* means "set rolling," that is, "founding" or "establishment."

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[99] Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888—1975), *Indian Philosophy* (two volumes, 1923—1927 [volume 1 reprinted 2008 by Oxford University Press]), vol. 1, pp. 281—282. Note: Radhakrishnan was a renowned scholar and statesman who served as Vice President of India from May 1952 through May 1962 and as President from May 1962 through May 1967.

> *"The Perfect One, O Bhikkhus, the Holy One, the Fully Enlightened One, in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares, set rolling [established] the unsurpassed Wheel of the Truth."*

Dhammacakkappavattana means "The Exposition of the Establishment of Wisdom." *Dhamma* may also be interpreted as "Truth," and *cakka* as "Wheel." Thus, another way of interpreting *Dhammacakkappavattana* is "The Turning (or Establishment) of the Wheel of Truth."

In this most important discourse, the *Buddha* expounds the Middle Path which He Himself discovered and which forms the essence of His Teaching. He opened the discourse by instructing the five monks, who believed in strict asceticism, to avoid the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, since neither of them leads to perfect Peace and Enlightenment. The former retards one's spiritual progress, while the latter weakens one's intellect. He criticized both these extremes, since He realized their futility through His own personal experience. In their place, He enunciated the most practical, rational, and beneficial path, which alone leads to perfect purity and absolute Liberation.

This discourse was expounded by the *Buddha* while He was residing in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares.

The intellectual five monks, who were closely associated with the *Buddha* for six years, were the only human beings who were present to hear the discourse. Books state that many invisible beings, such as *devas* and *brahmās*, also took advantage of the golden opportunity to listen to the discourse. Inasmuch as Buddhists believe in the existence of realms other than this world, inhabited by beings with subtle bodies invisible to the physical eye of man, it is, indeed, possible that many *devas* and *brahmās* were present on this great occasion. Nevertheless, it is clear that the *Buddha* was addressing the five monks and that the discourse was intended mainly for them.

At the outset, the *Buddha* cautioned them to avoid two extremes: "There are two extremes (*antā*) that should not be resorted to by a recluse (*pabbajitena*)." Special emphasis was placed on the two terms *antā*, which means "end" or "extreme," and *pabbajitena*, which means "one who has renounced the world."

One extreme, in the *Buddha's* own words, is the constant attachment to sensory pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*). The *Buddha* described this extreme as base, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and profitless. This should not be misunderstood to mean that the *Buddha* expected all His followers to give up material pleasures and retire to a forest without enjoying this life. The *Buddha* was not so narrow-minded.

Whatever the deluded sensualist may feel about it, to the dispassionate thinker, the pursuit of sensory pleasures is distinctly short-lived, never completely satisfying, and results in unpleasant consequences. Speaking of worldly happiness, the *Buddha* says that the acquisition of wealth and the enjoyment of possessions are two sources of pleasure for laymen. An understanding recluse would not, however, seek delight in the pursuit of these fleeting pleasures. To the surprise of the average person, a recluse might shun them. What constitutes pleasure to the average person is a source of alarm to the recluse, to whom renunciation (*nekkhamma*) alone is pleasure.

The other extreme is the addiction to self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). Commenting on this extreme, which is not practiced by ordinary people, the *Buddha* remarks that it is painful, ignoble, and profitless. Unlike the first extreme, this one is not described as base, worldly, and vulgar. The exclusion of these three terms is very striking. As a rule, it is the sincere recluse, who has renounced his attachment to sensory pleasures, who resorts to this painful method, mainly with the goal of gaining liberation from the ills of life. The *Buddha*, who had painful experience with this profitless course, describes it as useless. It only increases suffering instead of diminishing it.

The *Buddhas* and *Arahants* are described as *Ariyas*, meaning "Noble Ones." *Anariya* (ignoble) may therefore be considered as not characteristic of the *Buddha* and *Arahants*, who are free from passions. *Attha* means "the ultimate Good," which, for the *Buddha*, is *nibbāna*, the complete liberation from suffering. Therefore, *anatthasaṁhitā* may be construed as not conducive to ultimate Good.

The *Buddha* first cleared the issues and removed the false notions of His hearers. When their troubled minds became pliable and receptive, the *Buddha* related His personal experience regarding these two extremes.

The *Buddha* says that He (the *Tathāgata*), realizing the error of both these extremes, followed a middle path. This new path, or way, was discovered by Himself. The *Buddha* termed His new system *majjhimā paṭipadā*, the "Middle Way." To persuade His followers to give heed to His new path, He spoke of its various benefits. Unlike the two diametrically opposite extremes, this Middle Path produces the spiritual insight and intellectual wisdom to see things as they truly are. When the insight is clarified and the intellect is sharpened, everything is seen in its true perspective.

Furthermore, unlike the first extreme, which stimulates passions, this Middle Way leads to the subjugation of passion, which results in Peace. Above all, it leads to the attainment of the four supramundane Paths of Sainthood,[100] to the understanding of the Four Noble Truths, and, finally, to the realization of the ultimate Goal, *nibbāna*.

Now, what is this Middle Way? The *Buddha* tells us that it is the Noble Eightfold Path. The eight factors are then enumerated in the discourse.

The first factor is Right Understanding, the keynote of Buddhism. The *Buddha* started with Right Understanding in order to clear the doubts of the monks and guide them on the right way. Right Understanding deals with the knowledge of oneself as one really is — it leads to Right Thoughts, of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṁkappa*), free from craving (*taṇhā*), of good will (*avyāpāda-saṁkappa*), free from ill will (*vyāpāda*), and of harmlessness (*avihiṁsā-saṁkappa*), free from cruelty (*vihiṁsā*). Right Thoughts result in Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood, which perfect one's morality (*sīla*). The sixth factor is Right Effort, which deals with the elimination of unwholesome mental states and the cultivation of wholesome mental states within oneself. This self-purification is best done by a careful introspection, for which Right Mindfulness, the seventh factor, is essential. Right Effort, combined with Right Mindfulness, produce

[100] The four Paths, or Stages, of Sainthood are: (1) *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Winner); (2) *Sakadāgāmī* (Once-Returner); (3) *Anāgāmī* (Non-Returner); and (4) *Arahant* (Foe-Destroyer).

Right Concentration, or one-pointedness of the mind (*ekaggatā*), the eighth factor. A one-pointed mind resembles a polished mirror, where everything is clearly reflected with no distortion.

Prefacing the discourse with the two extremes and His newly-discovered Middle Way, the *Buddha* expounded the Four Noble Truths in detail.

Sacca is the Pāḷi term for "Truth," which means "that which is." Its Sanskrit equivalent is *satya*, which denotes an incontrovertible fact. The *Buddha* enunciates four such Truths, the foundations of His Teaching, which are associated with so-called "beings." Hence, His doctrine is homocentric (anthropocentric), in contrast to theocentric religions. It is introverted (introspective) and not extroverted. Whether a *Buddha* arises or not, these Truths exist, and it is a *Buddha* who reveals them to the deluded world. They do not and cannot change with time, because they are Eternal Truths. The *Buddha* was not indebted to anyone for His realization of them, as He stated in this discourse: "With regard to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light." These words are very significant, because they testify to the originality of His new Teaching. Hence, there is no justification in the statement that Buddhism is a natural outgrowth of Hinduism, although it is true that there are some fundamental doctrines common to both systems.

These truths are termed *ariya saccāni* (Noble Truths) in Pāḷi. They are so called because they were discovered by the Greatest *Ariya* (Noble One), that is, one who is far removed from all defilements.

The first Noble Truth (*dukkha-sacca*) deals with *dukkha*, which, for want of a better English equivalent, is inappropriately rendered by "suffering" or "sorrow." As a feeling, *dukkha* means that which is difficult to endure. As an abstract truth, *dukkha* is used in the sense of "contemptible (*du*-) emptiness (*kha*-)." The world rests on suffering — hence, it is contemptible. It is devoid of any reality — hence, it is empty or void. *Dukkha* therefore means "contemptible void."

Average men only see the surface. An *Ariya* (Noble One) sees things as they truly are. To an *Ariya*, all life is unsatisfactory, and he finds no real happiness in this world, which deceives mankind with illusory pleasures. Material happiness is merely the gratification of some desire.

All are subject to birth (*jāti*) and, consequently, to decay (*jarā*), disease (*vyādhi*), and, finally, death (*maraṇa*). No one is exempt from these four causes of suffering.

Not to have one's wishes fulfilled is also suffering. As a rule, one does not wish to be associated with persons or things one dislikes, nor does one wish to be separated from persons or things one likes. Moreover, one's cherished desires are not always gratified. At times, what one least expects or what one least desires are thrust on oneself. Such unexpected, unpleasant circumstances can become so intolerable and so painful that weak, ignorant people may be compelled to commit suicide, as if such an act would solve the problem.

Real happiness is found within and is not to be defined in terms of wealth, power, honors, or conquests. If such worldly possessions are forcibly or unjustly obtained, or are

misdirected or even viewed with attachment, they become a source of pain and sorrow for the possessors.

Normally, the enjoyment of sensory pleasures is the highest and only happiness for the average person. There is, no doubt, some momentary happiness in the anticipation, gratification, and remembrance of such fleeting material pleasures, but they are illusory and temporary. According to the *Buddha*, non-attachment (*virāgatā*), or the transcending of material pleasures, is the greater happiness.

In brief, this composite body (*pañcūpādānakkhandha*[101]) itself is a cause of suffering.

The second Noble Truth (*samudaya-sacca*) deals with the origin of suffering. It teaches that all suffering is rooted in selfish craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*).

There are three kinds of craving. The first is the grossest form of craving, which is attachment to all sensory pleasures (*kāmataṇhā*). The second is craving for existence (*bhavataṇhā*). The third is craving for non-existence (*vibhavataṇhā*). According to the Commentaries, the last two kinds of craving are (1) attachment to sensory pleasures, with the belief of Eternalism (*sassatadiṭṭhi*), and (2) that which is connected with the belief of Nihilism (*ucchedadiṭṭhi*). *Bhavataṇhā* may also be interpreted as attachment to the Form Realms and *vibhavataṇhā* as attachment to the Formless Realms, since *rūparāga* and *arūparāga* are treated as two Fetters (*saṁyojana*).

This craving is a powerful mental force latent in everyone and is the chief cause of most of the ills of life. It is this craving, gross and subtle, that leads to repeated births in *saṁsāra* and that makes one cling to all forms of life.

The grossest forms of craving are weakened on attaining the second stage of Sainthood, *Sakadāgāmī*, and are eradicated on attaining the third stage, *Anāgāmī*. The subtle forms of craving are eradicated on attaining the fourth stage, *Arahant*.

Right Understanding of the First Noble Truth leads to the eradication (*pahātabba*) of craving. The Second Noble Truth thus deals with the mental attitude of the ordinary man towards the external objects of sense.

The Third Noble Truth teaches that there is a complete cessation of suffering, which is *nibbāna*, the ultimate goal of Buddhism. It can be achieved in this life itself by the total eradication of all forms of craving.

The First Truth of suffering (*dukkha*), which depends on this so-called "being" and various aspects of life, is to be carefully perceived and examined (*pariññeyya*). This examination leads to a proper understanding of oneself as one really is.

The cause of suffering is craving (*taṇhā*), or attachment. This is the Second Noble Truth. As the *Dhammapada* (XVI, Affections, verse 216) states:

> *"Craving brings grief; craving brings fear. For those who are free from craving, there is neither grief nor fear."*

[101] That is, the five "aggregates of clinging" (also known as the five "aggregates of existence"): (1) bodily form (*rūpakkhandha*); (2) feeling (*vedanākkhandha*); (3) perception (*saññākkhandha*); (4) predisposing mental formations (*saṁkhārakkhandha*); and (5) discriminative consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*).

Craving, the *Buddha* says, leads to repeated births (*panobhavikā*). The Pāḷi term *panobhavikā* is noteworthy, since there are some scholars who maintain that the *Buddha* did not teach the doctrine of rebirth. The Second Noble Truth indirectly deals with past, present, and future births.

The Third Noble Truth has to be realized by developing (*bhāvetabba*) the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya Aṭṭhangika Magga*). This unique Eightfold Path is the only way to reach *nibbāna*. This is the Fourth Noble Truth.

Expounding the Four Noble Truths in various ways, the *Buddha* concluded the discourse with the powerful words:

> *"As long, O Bhikkhus, as the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Four Noble Truths, under their three aspects and twelve modes, was not perfectly clear to me, so long did I not acknowledge, in this world, inclusive of gods, māras, and brahmās and among the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment.*
>
> *"When the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Truths, under their three aspects and twelve modes, became perfectly clear to me, then only did I acknowledge, in this world, inclusive of gods, māras, and brahmās and among the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment (Anuttara Sammā-Sambodhi).*
>
> *"And there arose in me the knowledge and insight: 'Unshakable is the deliverance of my mind, this is my last birth, and, now, there is no existence again'."*

At the end of the discourse, Koṇḍañña, the senior of the five disciples, realized that whatever is subject to origination is also subject to cessation and, thereupon, attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*).

When the *Buddha* expounded the discourse of the *Dhammacakka*, the earth-bound deities exclaimed:

> *"This excellent Dhammacakka, which could not be expounded by any ascetic, priest, god, māra, or brahmā in this world, has been expounded by the Exalted One in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares."*

Hearing this, *devas* and *brahmās* of all the other planes also raised the same joyous cry. A radiant light, surpassing the effulgence of the gods, appeared in the world. The light of the *Dhamma* illuminated the whole world and brought peace and happiness to all beings.

THE FIRST DISCOURSE OF THE BUDDHA[102]

Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

Thus have I heard.

On one occasion, the Exalted One was residing in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares.[103] *Thereupon, the Exalted One addressed the group of five Bhikkhus as follows:*

THE TWO EXTREMES

"There are these two extremes, O Bhikkhus, which should be avoided by one who has renounced the world: indulgence in sensory pleasures — this is base, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and profitless — and addiction to self-mortification — this is painful, ignoble, and profitless.

THE MIDDLE PATH

"Abandoning both these extremes, the Tathāgata[104] *has comprehended the Middle Path, which promotes seeing and knowledge and which tends to peace, higher wisdom, enlightenment, and nibbāna.*

"What, O Bhikkhus, is that Middle Path comprehended by the Tathāgata which promotes seeing and knowledge and which tends to peace, higher wisdom, enlightenment, and nibbāna?

"It is, indeed, that Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

"This, O Bhikkhus, is the Middle Path comprehended by the Tathāgata.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

"Now this, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to Suffering: Birth [earthly existence], indeed, is suffering; old age is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; likewise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. To be conjoined

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[102] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Sacca Saṁyutta (Connected Discourses on the Truths). For an excellent presentation of the Four Noble Truths, cf. Rewata Dhamma, *The First Discourse of the Buddha* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1997]).

[103] Modern Saranath, where, in a former existence, the Master sacrificed His life to save a helpless doe and her unborn little one. The locality takes its modern name from the *Bodhisatta*, who, in that ancient birth, was called Sāraṅganātha "protector of the deer."

[104] Literally, "He who has thus come, He who has thus gone." The *Buddha* usually used this term when He referred to Himself.

with what one dislikes is suffering, to be separated from what one likes is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging are suffering.

"And again, O Bhikkhus, this is the Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering: It is that craving, associated with enjoyment and desire and seeking pleasure everywhere, which produces separate existence and leads to future births, and which keeps lingering on and on, that is the cause of suffering. In other words, it is craving for sense-pleasure, the desire for birth in a world of separateness, and the desire for existence to end.

"And this, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering: It is the complete cessation, giving up, abandoning of craving; it is release and detachment from craving.

"And this, once again, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering: It is, indeed, that Noble Eightfold Path: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. The Middle Path, O Bhikkhus, leads to nibbāna.

THE TWELVE ASPECTS OF WISDOM

"This is the Noble Path as to Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Path of Suffering should be perceived. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Path of Suffering has been perceived. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This is the Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering should be eradicated. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering has been eradicated. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This is the Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering should be realized. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering has been realized. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This is the Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering should be developed. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering has been developed. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

ENLIGHTENMENT NOT YET GAINED

"As long, O Bhikkhus, as the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Four Noble Truths, under their three aspects[105] *and twelve modes,*[106] *was not perfectly clear to me, so long did I not acknowledge, in this world, inclusive of gods, māras, and brahmās and among the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment.*

ENLIGHTENMENT GAINED

"When the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Truths, under their three aspects and twelve modes, became perfectly clear to me, then only did I acknowledge, in this world, inclusive of gods, māras, and brahmās and among the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment.

"And there arose in me the knowledge and insight: 'Unshakable is the deliverance of my mind,[107] *this is my last birth, and, now, there is no existence again'."*

AFTERMATH

[105] They are: (1) the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths (*saccañāṇa*); (2) the knowledge regarding the respective functions of the Four Noble Truths (*kiccañāṇa*); and (3) the knowledge that the respective function of each Truth has been accomplished (*katañāṇa*).

[106] Each Truth consists of three aspects (these are listed in footnote 106 above). Thus, four Truths consist of twelve modes.

[107] The reference is to the Fruit of Arahantship.

Thus did the Exalted One expound, and the delighted Bhikkhus applauded the words of the Exalted One.

When the doctrine was being expounded, the dustless, stainless, Truth-seeing eye[108] *arose in Venerable Koṇḍañña, and he saw that "whatever is subject to origination is also subject to cessation."*

When the Buddha expounded the discourse of the Dhammacakka, the earth-bound deities exclaimed: "This excellent Dhammacakka, which could not be expounded by any ascetic, priest, god, māra, or brahmā in this world, has been expounded by the Exalted One in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares."

Hearing this, the devas[109] *of Cātummahārājika, Tāvatiṁsā, Yāmā, Tusitā, Nimmānarati, Paranimmitavasavatti, and the brahmās of Brahmā Pārisajja, Brahmā Purohita, Mahā Brahmā, Parittābhā, Appamāṇābhā, Ābhassarā, Parittasubhā, Appamāṇasubhā, Subhakiṇṇā, Vehapphalā, Avihā, Atappā, Sudassā, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭhā, also raised the same joyous cry.*

Thus, at that very moment, at that very instant, this cry extended as far as the brahma-realm. These ten thousand world systems quaked, tottered, and trembled violently.

A radiant light, surpassing the effulgence of the gods, appeared in the world. Then, the Exalted One said: "Friends, Koṇḍañña has indeed understood. Friends, Koṇḍañña has indeed understood."

Therefore, Venerable Koṇḍañña was named Aññāta Koṇḍañña.

Some Reflections on the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

1. Buddhism is based on personal experience. As such, it is rational and not speculative.
2. The *Buddha* discarded all authority and developed a Golden Mean which was purely His own.
3. Buddhism is a Way or a Path (*magga*).
4. Rational understanding is the keynote of Buddhism.
5. Blind beliefs are rejected.
6. Instead of beliefs and dogmas, the importance of practice is emphasized. Mere beliefs and dogmas cannot liberate a person.

[108] *Dhammacakkhu* signifies any of the three lower Stages of Sainthood: *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Winner); *Sakadāgāmī* (Once-Returner); and *Anāgāmī* (Non-Returner). Upon hearing this discourse, Koṇḍañña attained the first Stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*). The other *Bhikkhus* attained *Sotāpanna* later. Note: *Sotāpanna* refers to "one who has entered the stream," while *Sotāpatti* means "entry into the stream," "path and fruition of Stream-Entry." *Sotāpanna* is the first stage of Sainthood. There are three kinds of *Sotāpanna*: (1) one "with seven rebirths at most"; (2) one "passing from one noble family to another"; and (3) one "germinating only once more." Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 202.

[109] Celestial beings of the *deva* and *brahmā* planes.

7. Rites and rituals, so greatly emphasized in the *Vedas*, play no part in Buddhism.
8. There are no gods to be propitiated.
9. There is no priestly class to mediate.
10. Morality (*sīla*), Concentration (*samādhi*), and Wisdom (*paññā*) are essential to achieve the goal — *nibbāna*.

11. The foundations of Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths, which can be verified by one's own experience.
12. The Four Noble Truths are associated with one's being — hence, Buddhism is homocentric (anthropocentric) and introverted (introspective).
13. The Four Noble Truths were discovered by the *Buddha*, and He was not indebted to anyone for them. In His own words: "They were not heard of before."
14. Being truths, they cannot change with time.

15. The first Truth, Suffering (*dukkha*), which deals with the constituents of self or so-called "individuality" and the different phases of life, is to be analyzed, scrutinized, and examined. This analysis, scrutiny, and examination leads to a proper understanding of oneself.
16. Rational understanding of the first Truth leads to the eradication of the cause of suffering — the second Truth, which deals with the psychological attitude of the ordinary man (the "worldling" [*puthujjana*]) towards external objects of sense.

17. The second Truth, the Cause of Suffering (*samudaya*), is concerned with a powerful force latent in us all — craving (*taṇhā*), or attachment.
18. It is this powerful, invisible mental force that is the cause of all the ills of life.
19. The second Truth indirectly deals with past, present, and future births.
20. The existence of a series of births is, therefore, acknowledged by the *Buddha*.
21. The doctrine of *kamma*,[110] its corollary, is thereby implied.

22. The third Truth, the Cessation of Suffering (*nirodha*), though dependent upon oneself, is beyond logical reasoning and is supramundane (*lokuttara*), unlike the first two Truths, which are mundane (*lokiya*).
23. The third Truth is purely a self-realization (a *dhamma*[111]), to be comprehended by the mental eye (*sacchikātabba*).
24. This Truth is to be realized by complete renunciation (*nekkhamma*). It is not a case of renouncing external objects but of renouncing internal attachment to the external world.

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[110] Sanskrit *Karma*. *Kamma* denotes wholesome and unwholesome volitional actions and their concomitant mental factors, which cause rebirth and shape one's destiny. These karmic volitions (*kamma-cetanā*) become manifest as wholesome or unwholesome actions by body (*kāya-kamma*), speech (*vacī-kamma*), and mind (*mano-kamma*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 91—94.

[111] Here, *dhamma* means "quality, thing, phenomenon, object of mind."

25. Thus, the third Truth is realized with the complete eradication of attachment to the external world. It should be noted that mere complete destruction of the force is not the third Truth — *nibbāna*. That would be tantamount to annihilation. *Nibbāna* has to be realized by eradicating that which binds one to the mundane.
26. It should also be understood that *nibbāna* is not produced (*uppādetabba*) but is attained (*pattaba*). It can be attained in this life itself. It therefore follows that, though rebirth is one of the chief doctrines of Buddhism, the goal of Buddhism does not depend on a future rebirth.

27. The third Truth has to be realized by developing the fourth Truth.
28. To eradicate one mighty force, eight powerful factors have to be developed — the Noble Eightfold Path.
29. All these eight factors are purely mental.
30. Eight powerful wholesome mental forces are summoned to attack one latent unwholesome mental force.
31. Absolute purity, complete deliverance from all repeated births, a mind released from all defilements,[112] and immortality (*amata*)[113] are the attendant blessings of this great victory. Is this deliverance a perfection or absolute purity? The latter is preferable. In each case, one might ask the questions — What is being perfected? What is being purified? Buddhism does not recognize a being or permanent entity, only a stream of consciousness. It is thus more correct to say that it is this stream of consciousness that is purified by eradicating all defilements.

[112] Defilements (*kilesa*) are mind-defiling, unwholesome qualities. There are ten defilements, namely: (1) greed (*lobha*), or attachment; (2) hatred, or aversion (*dosa*); (3) delusion (*moha*); (4) conceit (*māna*); (5) false views (*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*); (6) skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*); (7) lethargy, depression, mental dullness (*thīna*); (8) restlessness (*uddhacca*); (9) moral shamelessness (*ahirika*); and (10) lack of moral dread, or unconscientiousness (*anottappa*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 103.

[113] That is, final release from the endless cycle of rebirths (*saṁsāra*), and, therefore, from ever-repeated deaths.

THE SECOND DISCOURSE OF THE BUDDHA[114]

Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta

On one occasion, the Exalted One was dwelling at the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares. Then, the Exalted One addressed the group of Five Bhikkhus, saying: "O Bhikkhus!"

"Lord," they replied.

Thereupon, the Exalted One spoke as follows:

"The body,[115] *O Bhikkhus, is soulless.*[116] *If, O Bhikkhus, there were in [this body] a soul,*[117] *the body would not be subject to suffering. 'Let this body be thus, let this body not be thus.' Such possibilities would also exist. But, inasmuch as this body is soulless, it is subject to suffering, and no possibilities exist for [ordering]: 'Let this body be thus, let this body not be thus.'*

"In like manner, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness[118] *are soulless.*[119]

"What do you think, O Bhikkhus, is this body permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent,[120] *Lord."*

"Is that which is impermanent happy or painful?"

"It is painful,[121] *Lord."*

"Is it justifiable, then, to think of that which is impermanent, painful, and transitory: 'This is mine; I am this; this is my soul?'"

"Certainly not, Lord."

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[114] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Khandhavagga, Khandha Saṁyutta.

[115] *Rūpa* "body, corporeality, corporeal group." The term *rūpa* designates a combination of several physical phenomena constituting a temporary unity. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 175.

[116] *Anattā* (Sanskrit *anātman*) "non-self, non-ego, egolessness, soullessness." The doctrine of *anattā* teaches that, neither within the bodily and mental phenomena of existence, nor outside of them, can there be found anything that, in the ultimate sense, can be regarded as a self-existing real ego-entity, soul, or any other abiding substance. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 14—16.

[117] A permanent, unchanging entity created by a God or emanating from a *paramātma* (Divine Essence).

[118] The so-called "being" of these five aggregates (cf. footnote 105). Outside of these five aggregates, there is no being. If the aggregates are removed, nothing remains. A soul does not abide in any one group or in any aggregate, nor in all of them, nor outside of them.

[119] The *Buddha* makes the same assertion as above in connection with each of the remaining four parts of the so-called "being." The *Buddha* raises similar queries with regard to each of the other constituents of being. The translation is abridged here.

[120] *Anicca* "impermanent."

[121] *Dukkha* "painful, sorrowful, suffering, ill, unsatisfactory."

"Similarly, O Bhikkhus, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are impermanent and painful.

"Is it justifiable, then, to think of these which are impermanent, painful, and transitory: 'These are mine; I am these; these are my soul?'"

"Certainly not, Lord."

"Then, O Bhikkhus, the whole body, whether past, present, or future, personal or external, coarse or subtle, low or high, far or near, should be understood by right knowledge in its real nature: 'This is not mine; I am not this; this is not my soul.'

"All feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness, whether past, present, or future, personal or external, coarse or subtle, low or high, far or near, should be understood by right knowledge in their real nature: 'These are not mine; I am not these; these are not my soul.'

"The learned noble disciple who sees thus becomes disgusted with the body, with feelings, with perceptions, with mental formations, and with consciousness; he becomes detached from these abhorrent things and is liberated through detachment. Then, the knowledge dawns on him: 'Emancipated am I.' He understands that rebirth is ended, lived is the Holy Life, done what should be done, there is no more of this state again."

This the Exalted One said, and the delighted Bhikkhus applauded the words of the Exalted One.

When the Buddha expounded this Teaching, the minds of the group of five Bhikkhus were freed of defilements without any attachments.[122] ■

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[122] That is, they all attained Arahantship.

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7

The Teaching of the Dhamma

"Blessed is the birth of the Buddha, blessed is the teaching of the Dhamma, blessed is the Sangha,[124] *where all live in harmony."*[125]

The Conversion of Yasa and His Friends

In Benares, there was a millionaire's son named Yasa, who led a luxurious life. One morning, he arose early and, to his utter disgust, saw his female attendants and musicians asleep in repulsive positions. The whole spectacle was so disgusting that the palace presented the gloomy appearance of a charnel house. Realizing the vanities of the worldly life, he stole away from home, saying: "I am distressed, I am oppressed." He headed in the direction of Isipatana, where the *Buddha* was temporarily residing after having taught the *Dhamma* to the five *Bhikkhus*.[126]

When Yasa arrived at Isipatana, the *Buddha*, as usual, was pacing back and forth in an open space. Seeing Yasa coming from afar, the *Buddha* stopped his pacing and sat down. Yasa stopped not far from the *Buddha* and cried out: "I am distressed, I am oppressed."

Thereupon, the *Buddha* replied: "There is no distress here, O Yasa! There is no oppression here, O Yasa! Come here, Yasa. Take a seat. I will expound the *Dhamma* to you."

The distressed Yasa was pleased to hear the encouraging words of the *Buddha*. Removing his golden sandals, he approached the *Buddha*, respectfully saluted Him, and sat on one side.

The *Buddha* then expounded the doctrine to him, and he attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*).

At first, the *Buddha* spoke to Yasa about generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), celestial states (*sagga*), the evils of sensory pleasures (*kāmādīnava*), and the blessings of

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[124] The *Sangha* is the world's oldest historic celibate Order, founded by the *Buddha* some 2600 years ago. It is "democratic in constitution and communistic in distribution." Strictly speaking, the *Sangha* refers only to those noble disciples who have realized the Four Paths and Four Fruits. The ordinary *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunīs* are merely their representatives. The Pāḷi word for the larger Buddhist community is *parisā*.

[125] *Dhammapada*, XIV, The Buddha, verse 194.

[126] This event took place on the fifth day after the *Buddha* had delivered His first discourse. At that time, all of the five *Bhikkhus* had already attained Arahantship.

renunciation (*nekkhammānisaṁsa*). When the *Buddha* found that Yasa's mind was pliable and was ready to appreciate the deeper teaching, He taught the Four Noble Truths.

Yasa's mother was the first to notice the absence of her son, and she reported the matter to her husband. The millionaire immediately dispatched horsemen in four directions, and he himself went towards Isipatana, following the footprints left by the golden slippers. The *Buddha* saw him coming from afar and, by means of His psychic powers, willed that the millionaire should not be able to see his son.

The millionaire approached the *Buddha* and respectfully inquired whether He had seen his son Yasa. The *Buddha* invited him to sit down and assured him that he would be able to see his son. Pleased with the happy news, the millionaire sat down. Thereupon, the *Buddha* delivered a discourse to him, and he was so delighted he exclaimed:

> *"Excellent, O Lord, excellent! It is as if, Lord, a man were to set upright that which was overturned, or were to reveal that which was hidden, or were to point out the way to one who had gone astray, or were to hold a lamp amidst the darkness so that those who have eyes might see! Even so has the Exalted One expounded the doctrine in various ways.*
>
> *"I, Lord, take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. May the Lord receive me as a follower who has taken refuge from this day to the end of my life!"*

The millionaire was thus the first lay follower to seek refuge using the threefold formula.

On hearing the discourse delivered to his father, Yasa attained Arahantship. Thereupon, the *Buddha* withdrew his psychic powers so that Yasa's father could see his son. The joyous millionaire beheld his son and invited the *Buddha* and His disciples for alms on the following day. The *Buddha* expressed His acceptance of the invitation by His silence.

After the departure of the millionaire, Yasa begged the *Buddha* to grant him the Lesser[127] and the Higher Ordination.

> *"Come, O Bhikkhu! Well taught is the Doctrine. Lead the Holy Life to make a complete end of suffering."*

With these words, the *Buddha* conferred on him the Higher Ordination.[128]

With the Venerable Yasa, the number of *Arahants* increased to six.

As invited, the *Buddha* visited the millionaire's house the following day with His six disciples.

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[127] By *pabbajjā*, literally, "going forth" or "renunciation," which is the mere admission into the Holy Order by seeking refuge in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*.

[128] In the early days of the Order, the Higher Ordination, *Upasampadā*, literally, "replete with a higher morality," was granted with these words.

Venerable Yasa's mother and former wife heard the doctrine expounded by the *Buddha* and, having attained the first stage of Sainthood, became His first two lay female disciples.[129]

Venerable Yasa had four distinguished friends, named Vimala, Subāhu, Punnajji, and Gavampati. When they heard that their noble friend had shaved his head and beard and, donning the saffron-colored robe, had entered the homeless life, they approached Venerable Yasa and expressed their desire to follow his example. At that, Venerable Yasa introduced them to the *Buddha*, and, on hearing the *Dhamma*, they also attained Arahantship.

Fifty more worthy friends of Venerable Yasa, who belonged to leading families of various districts, after receiving instructions from the *Buddha*, attained Arahantship and entered the Holy Order.

Hardly two months had elapsed since His Enlightenment, and the number of *Arahants* had risen to sixty. All of them came from distinguished families and were worthy sons of worthy fathers.

The First Messengers of Truth

The *Buddha*, who had succeeded in enlightening sixty disciples, decided to send them forth as messengers of Truth to teach His new *Dhamma* to all, without distinction. Before dispatching them in various directions, He exhorted them as follows:

> *"Freed am I, O Bhikkhus, from all bonds, whether divine or human. You, too, O Bhikkhus, are freed from all bonds, whether divine or human.*
>
> *"Go forth, O Bhikkhus, for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit, and happiness of gods and men. Let not two of you go the same way: Teach, O Bhikkhus, the Dhamma, excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, both in the spirit and in the letter. Proclaim the Holy Life,*[130] *altogether perfect and pure.*
>
> *"There are beings with little dust in their eyes, who, not hearing the Dhamma, will perish. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma.*
>
> *"I, too, O Bhikkhus, will go to Uruvelā in Senānigāma in order to teach the Dhamma.*

[129] *Upāsaka* (m.) and *Upāsikā* (f.), literally, "one who closely associates with the Triple Gem." These two terms are applied to male and female lay followers of the *Buddha* respectively. One becomes an *Upāsaka* or *Upāsikā* immediately after taking the three Refuges, namely: *Buddhaṁ saranaṁ gacchāmi* "I go to the *Buddha* for Refuge," *Dhammaṁ saranaṁ gacchāmi* "I go to the *Dhamma* for Refuge," *Saṅghaṁ saranaṁ gacchāmi* "I go to the *Sangha* for Refuge." This is the threefold formula (*tevācika*).

[130] The Pāḷi term *brahmacariya* "Holy Life," has no connection whatsoever with a God or *Brahmā*. It is used in the sense of "noble," "pure," or "holy." *Brahmacariya* refers to the life of a *Bhikkhu*. It also refers to a lay disciple who observes the eight precepts, especially the third precept, which requires complete chastity, that is, total abstinence from sexual activity of any kind.

"Hoist the Flag of the Sage. Teach the Sublime Dhamma. Work for the good of others, you who have done your duty."

The *Buddha* was thus the first religious teacher to send His enlightened ordained disciples to propagate the doctrine out of compassion for others. With no permanent abode, alone and penniless, these first missionaries were expected to wander from place to place to teach the sublime *Dhamma*. They had no material possessions other than their robes to cover themselves and an alms-bowl to collect food. Inasmuch as the field was extensive and the workers were comparatively few, they were advised to undertake their missionary journeys alone. Since they were *Arahants*, who were freed from all sensory bonds, their chief and only objective was to teach the *Dhamma* and to proclaim the Holy Life (*brahmacariya*). The original role of *Arahants*, who had achieved their life's goal, was to work for the moral betterment of others, both by example and precept. Material development, though essential for the overall welfare of mankind, was not their concern.

Founding of the Order of the Sangha

At that time, there were sixty *Arahant* disciples in the world. With these Pure Ones as the nucleus, the *Buddha* founded a celibate Order, which "was democratic in constitution and communistic in distribution." Though the original members were drawn from the highest strata of society and were all educated and rich men, the Order was open to all worthy ones, regardless of caste, class, or rank. Both young and old, belonging to all the castes, were freely admitted to the Order and lived like brothers of the same family, without any distinction. This Noble Order of *Bhikkhus*,[131] which stands to this day, is the oldest continuous body of celibates in the world.

Not everyone was expected to leave the household life and take up the life of a homeless mendicant. Lay followers, too, were able to lead a good life in accordance with the *Dhamma* and attain Sainthood. Venerable Yasa's parents and his former wife, for instance, were the foremost lay followers of the *Buddha*. All three were sufficiently spiritually advanced to attain the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*).

With the sixty *Arahants* as ideal messengers of the Truth, the *Buddha* decided to propagate His sublime *Dhamma*, purely by expounding the doctrine to those who wished to listen.

Conversion of Thirty Young Men

The *Buddha* resided at Isipatana near Benares for as long as He liked and then set out for Uruvelā. On the way, He rested at the foot of a tree in a grove.

[131] Sanskrit *Bhikṣu*. Though commonly translated as "monk," the original meaning of the Pāḷi term *Bhikkhu* was "wandering ascetic, mendicant, one who seeks alms."

At that time, thirty happy young men went with their wives to that particular grove to amuse themselves. Since one of them had no wife, he took a courtesan with him. While they were enjoying themselves, this woman absconded with their valuables. The young men searched for her in the forest and, seeing the *Buddha*, inquired of Him whether He had seen a woman passing that way. "Which do you think, young men, is more important: seeking a woman, or seeking oneself?"[132] questioned the *Buddha*. "Seeking oneself is more important, O Lord!" replied the young men. "Well then, sit down. I shall teach the doctrine to you," said the *Buddha*. "Very well, Lord," they replied, and, respectfully saluting the Exalted One, sat down expectantly. They attentively listened to Him and obtained "The Eye of Truth."[133] After this, they entered the Order and received the Higher Ordination.

Conversion of the Three Kassapa Brothers

Wandering from place to place, in due course, the *Buddha* arrived at Uruvelā. Here, there lived three ascetics with matted hair known as Uruvelā Kassapa, Nadī Kassapa, and Gayā Kassapa.[134] They were brothers living separately, with 500, 300, and 200 followers, respectively. The oldest brother was infatuated with his own spiritual attainments and was laboring under the misconception that he was an *Arahant*. The *Buddha* approached him first and sought his permission to spend the night in his fire-chamber, where a fierce serpent-king dwelt. By means of His psychic powers, the *Buddha* subdued the serpent. This pleased Uruvelā Kassapa, and he invited the *Buddha* to stay there as his guest. The *Buddha* was compelled to exhibit His psychic powers on several occasions to impress the ascetic, but, still, Uruvelā Kassapa adhered to the belief that the *Buddha* was not an *Arahant* and that he was. Finally, the *Buddha* was able to prove that He was indeed an *Arahant*. Thereupon, Uruvelā Kassapa and his followers entered the Order and obtained the Higher Ordination.

Uruvelā Kassapa's brothers and their followers also followed his example. Accompanied by the three Kassapa brothers and their thousand followers, the *Buddha* went to Gayā Sīsa, not far from Uruvelā. Here, He expounded the Ādittapariyāya Sutta[135] (the discourse on "all is in flames," also known as the "Fire Discourse" or the "Fire Sermon"), hearing which all attained Arahantship.

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[132] "Seeking oneself": This phrase is very significant. *Attānaṁ* is the accusative of *attā*, which means "self." Here, the *Buddha* is not referring to any soul or spirit latent in man as some scholars have attempted to show. How could the *Buddha* affirm the existence of a soul when He clearly denied its existence in His second discourse? The *Buddha* is using this phrase exactly in the sense of "seek yourself" or "look within."

[133] *Dhammacakkhu* — This refers to any of the three lower Stages of Sainthood: *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Winner), *Sakadāgāmī* (Once-Returner), and *Anāgāmī* (Non-Returner).

[134] The three brothers were named after where they dwelt: Uruvelā Kassapa = "Kassapa of Uruvelā," Nadī Kassapa = "Kassapa of the River," Gayā Kassapa = "Kassapa of Gayā."

[135] *Vinaya Piṭaka*, Khandhaka, Mahāvagga, 1:21; *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, 35. Connected Discourses on the Six Sense Bases (*Saḷāyatanasaṁyutta*), Division I. The Root Fifty, III. The All, Burning, no. 35:28.

Ādittapariyāya Sutta — Discourse on "All Is in Flames"

"All is in flames, O Bhikkhus! What, O Bhikkhus, is all in flames? Eye is in flames. Forms are in flames. Eye-contact is in flames. Feeling which is pleasurable or painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful, arising from eye-contact is in flames. By what is it kindled? By the flames of lust, hatred, ignorance, birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair is it kindled, I declare.

"Ear is in flames. Sounds are in flames. Ear-contact is in flames. Feeling which is pleasurable or painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful, arising from ear-contact is in flames. By what is it kindled? By the flames of lust, hatred, ignorance, birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair is it kindled, I declare.

"Nose is in flames. Smells are in flames. Nose-contact is in flames. Feeling which is pleasurable or painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful, arising from nose-contact is in flames. By what is it kindled? By the flames of lust, hatred, ignorance, birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair is it kindled, I declare.

"Tongue is in flames. Taste is in flames. Tongue-contact is in flames. Feeling which is pleasurable or painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful, arising from tongue-contact is in flames. By what is it kindled? By the flames of lust, hatred, ignorance, birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair is it kindled, I declare.

"Body is in flames. Touch is in flames. Body-contact is in flames. Feeling which is pleasurable or painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful, arising from body-contact is in flames. By what is it kindled? By the flames of lust, hatred, ignorance, birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair is it kindled, I declare.

"Mind is in flames. Mental objects are in flames. Mental-contact is in flames. Feeling which is pleasurable or painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful, arising from mental-contact is in flames. By what is it kindled? By the flames of lust, hatred, ignorance, birth, decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair is it kindled, I declare.

"Reflecting thus, O Bhikkhus, the learned Noble Disciple becomes disgusted with the eye, with forms, with eye-consciousness, with eye-contact, whatever feeling — pleasurable, painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful — that arises from contact with the eye.

"Reflecting thus, O Bhikkhus, the learned Noble Disciple becomes disgusted with the ear, with sounds, with ear-consciousness, with ear-contact, whatever feeling — pleasurable, painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful — that arises from contact with the ear.

"Reflecting thus, O Bhikkhus, the learned Noble Disciple becomes disgusted with the nose, with smells, with nose-consciousness, with nose-contact,

whatever feeling — pleasurable, painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful — that arises from contact with the nose.

"Reflecting thus, O Bhikkhus, the learned Noble Disciple becomes disgusted with the tongue, with taste, with tongue-consciousness, with tongue-contact, whatever feeling — pleasurable, painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful — that arises from contact with the tongue.

"Reflecting thus, O Bhikkhus, the learned Noble Disciple becomes disgusted with the body, with touch, with body-consciousness, with body-contact, whatever feeling — pleasurable, painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful — that arises from contact with the body.

"Reflecting thus, O Bhikkhus, the learned Noble Disciple becomes disgusted with the mind, with mental objects, with mental-consciousness, with mental-contact, whatever feeling — pleasurable, painful, or neither pleasurable nor painful — that arises from contact with the mind.

"With disgust, he becomes detached; with detachment, he is delivered. He understands that birth is ended, lived is the Holy Life, done what should be done, and that there is no more of this state again."

When the *Buddha* concluded this discourse, all of the thousand followers of the three Kassapa brothers attained Arahantship, thereby eradicating all Defilements.

Conversion of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, the two Chief Disciples

Not far from Rājagaha, in the village of Upatissa, also known as Nālaka, there lived a very intelligent youth named Sāriputta.[136] Since he belonged to the leading family of the village, he was also known as Upatissa. Though nurtured in Brahmanism, his broad outlook on life and mature wisdom compelled him to renounce his ancestral religion for the more tolerant and scientific Teachings of the *Buddha*. His brothers and sisters followed his noble example. His father, Vanganta, apparently remained an adherent of Brahmanism. His mother, who was displeased with her son for having become a disciple of the *Buddha*, was herself converted to Buddhism by Sāriputta at the moment of his death.

Sāriputta was brought up in the lap of luxury. He found a very intimate friend in Moggallāna, also known as Kolita, with whom he had been closely associated in a past life. One day, as both of them were enjoying a hilltop festival, they realized how vain, how transient, were all sensory pleasures. Instantly, they decided to renounce the world and seek the Path of Release. From that moment on, they wandered from place to place in search of Peace.

The two young seekers went first to Sañjaya, who had a large following, and sought ordination under him. Before long, they acquired the meager knowledge which

[136] Literally, "son of Sāri."

their master was able to impart to them, but, dissatisfied with his teaching, inasmuch as they could not find a remedy for that universal ailment with which humanity is assailed, they left him and continued wandering in search of Peace. In the course of their wanderings, they approached many famous Brahmins and ascetics, but disappointment met them everywhere. Ultimately, they returned to their own village and agreed between themselves that whoever would first discover the Path should inform the other.

It was at that time that the *Buddha* dispatched His sixty disciples to proclaim the *Dhamma* to the world. The *Buddha* Himself proceeded towards Uruvelā, while the Venerable Assaji, one of the first five disciples, headed in the direction of Rājagaha.

The good *kamma*[137] of Sāriputta and Moggallāna now intervened, as if it had been watching their spiritual progress with sympathetic eyes; for Sāriputta, while wandering about the city of Rājagaha, casually met an ascetic whose noble appearance and saintly deportment at once attracted his attention. The ascetic's eyes were fixed lowly at a yoke's distance from him, and his calm face betokened deep peace within. With body well composed and robes neatly arranged, this venerable figure passed with measured steps from door to door, accepting the morsels of food which the charitable placed in his bowl. "Never before have I seen," he thought to himself, "an ascetic like this. Surely he must be one of those who have attained Arahantship or one who is practicing the path leading to Arahantship. What if I were to approach him and ask, 'For whose sake, Sir, have you renounced the world? Who is your teacher? Whose doctrine do you profess?'"

However, Sāriputta refrained from questioning him, since he thought that he would interfere with the ascetic's silent begging rounds by so doing.

The *Arahant* Assaji, having obtained what little he needed, then sought a suitable place to eat his meal. Seeing this, Sāriputta gladly availed himself of the opportunity to offer him his own stool and water from his pot. Fulfilling, thus, the preliminary duties of a pupil, he exchanged pleasant greetings with Venerable Assaji and reverently inquired: "Venerable Sir, your demeanor is calm and serene, the hue of your skin is clean and clear. For whose sake have you renounced the world? Who is your teacher? Whose doctrine do you profess?"

The unassuming *Arahant* Assaji modestly replied, as is the characteristic of all noble men: "I am still young in the Order, brother, and I am not able to expound the *Dhamma* to you at length."

"I am called Upatissa, Venerable Sir. Say much or little according to your ability, and leave it to me to understand in a hundred or a thousand ways. Tell me just the substance. That is all I require. A long, drawn-out explanation is not necessary."

Thereupon, Venerable Assaji uttered a four-line stanza, thus skillfully summing up the profound philosophy of the Master on the truth of the law of cause and effect:

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[137] Sanskrit *karma*. *Kamma* means "volitional action," specifically, the wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) volitions (*cetanā*) and their concomitant mental factors (*cetasika*), causing rebirth (*jāti*, *paṭisandhi*) and shaping the destiny of beings. These karmical volitions (*kamma-cetanā*) become manifest as wholesome or unwholesome actions by body (*kāya-kamma*), speech (*vacī-kamma*), or mind (*mano-kamma*). The term "*kamma*" does not apply to the consequence or result of mental or physical action — that is known as *vipāka*. Thus, *kamma* is the deed; *vipāka* is the result.

Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā,
Tesaṁ hetuṁ tathāgato,
Āha tesañ ca yo nirodho:
Evaṁ vādī mahā samano.

"Of things that proceed from a cause,
Their cause the Tathāgata has explained,
And also their cessation:
Thus teaches the Great Ascetic."

Sāriputta was sufficiently spiritually advanced to comprehend such a lofty teaching even though it was succinctly expressed. He was only in need of a slight indication to discover the truth. So well did the Venerable Assaji guide him on his upward path that, immediately upon hearing the first two lines, Sāriputta attained the first stage of Sainthood, *Sotāpanna*.

The new convert Sāriputta must have been, no doubt, unable to find the words to thank his venerable teacher for introducing him to the sublime Teachings of the *Buddha*. He expressed his deep indebtedness for the brilliant exposition of the truth given by Venerable Assaji and, obtaining from him the particulars with regard to the Master, took his leave.

Later, the devotion he showed towards his teacher was such that, inasmuch as he had first heard the *Dhamma* from Venerable Assaji, he would extend his clasped hands in an attitude of reverent obeisance in whatever direction he heard that the Venerable Assaji was residing, and he would also turn his head in that direction whenever he lay down to sleep.

Now, in accordance with the agreement they had made, Sāriputta returned to his friend Moggallāna to convey the joyful news. Moggallāna, who was as spiritually advanced as his friend, also attained the first stage of Sainthood on hearing the stanza. Overwhelmed with joy, as in duty bound, they went to meet their teacher Sañjaya with the objective of converting him to the new doctrine. Frustrated in their attempt, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, accompanied by many of Sañjaya's followers, who readily joined them, set out for the Veḷuvana monastery to visit their illustrious Teacher, the *Buddha*.

In compliance with their request, the *Buddha* admitted both of them into the Order by uttering the words: *Etha Bhikkhave!* "Come, O *Bhikkhus*!"

Two weeks later, Venerable Sāriputta attained Arahantship on hearing the *Buddha* expound the Vedanā Pariggaha Sutta (*Majjhima Nikāya*, no. 74) to the wandering ascetic Dīghanakha. On the very same day, in the evening, the *Buddha* gathered round Him His disciples and the exalted positions of the first and second disciples in the *Sangha* were conferred, respectively, on the Theras Sāriputta and Moggallāna, who had also attained Arahantship a week earlier. ■

8

The Buddha and His Relatives

"Service to relatives is a blessing."[138]

King Suddhodana Desires to See the Buddha

News reached the ears of the aged King Suddhodana that the *Buddha* was residing at Rājagaha and that He was teaching the *Dhamma* there. On hearing this news, King Suddhodana's desire to see his enlightened son grew stronger and stronger. On nine successive occasions, the King sent emissaries, each with a large retinue, to invite the *Buddha* to visit Kapilavatthu. Contrary to the King's expectations, they all heard the *Dhamma* and, attaining Arahantship, entered the Order. Since *Arahants* are indifferent to worldly concerns, they did not convey the King's message to the *Buddha*.

The disappointed King finally dispatched another faithful emissary, Kāludāyī, who had been a boyhood playmate of the *Buddha*. He agreed to go inasmuch as he was granted permission by the King to enter the Order. Like the other emissaries before him, he had the good fortune to attain Arahantship and joined the Order. But, unlike the others, he conveyed the King's message to the *Buddha* and persuaded Him to visit His aged royal father. Since the season was most suitable for traveling, the *Buddha*, attended by a large retinue of His disciples, journeyed the whole distance in slow steps, proclaiming the *Dhamma* on the way, and, in due course, arrived at Kapilavatthu after two months.

Arrangements were made for the *Buddha* to reside at a park owned by Nigrodha, a Sākyan. The conceited elderly Sākyans, thinking to themselves: "He is our younger brother, our nephew, our grandson," said to the young Sākyan princes: "You can pay Him obeisance if you like; we will sit behind you." As they sat without paying Him due reverence, the *Buddha* subdued their pride by rising into the air and exhibiting the "Twin Wonder."[139] The King, seeing this wonderful display, saluted Him immediately, saying

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[138] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Sutta Nipāta*, Mangala Sutta.

[139] *Yamaka Pāṭihāriya*, often translated as "The Twin Miracle," is a psychic phenomenon that only a *Buddha* can perform. By His psychic powers, He makes it appear as though fire and water are issuing from the pores of His body simultaneously. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* Commentary states that by fire and water are meant red and blue rays.

that this was his third salutation.[140] All Sākyans were then compelled to pay Him due reverence. Thereupon, the *Buddha* came down from the sky and sat on the seat prepared for Him. The humbled Sākyans took their seats, eager to listen to His Teaching.

At this moment, an unprecedented shower of rain began to fall on the Sākyan kinsfolk. The occurrence of this strange happening resulted in a discussion among themselves. Thereupon, the *Buddha* expounded the *Vessantara Jātaka*[141] to show that a similar incident took place in the presence of His relatives in a previous birth.

The Sākyans were delighted with the discourse, and they departed, not knowing that it was their duty to invite the *Buddha* and His disciples for the noon meal on the following day. It did not occur to the King either to invite the *Buddha*, although he thought to himself: "If my son does not come to the palace, where will He go?" Returning home, the King ordered several kinds of food to be made ready, expecting their arrival at the palace.

The Buddha Goes Round for Alms; The Conversion of King Suddhodana

Inasmuch as there had been no special invitation for the noon meal, the *Buddha* and His disciples got ready, on the following day, to seek alms from the houses of the citizens of Kapilavatthu. Before proceeding, He considered to Himself: "Did the *Buddhas* of the past, upon entering the city of their kinsfolk, immediately enter the houses of their relatives, or did they go from house to house in regular order receiving alms?" Perceiving that they went from house to house, the *Buddha* went into the streets of Kapilavatthu seeking alms.

On hearing of this seemingly unbefitting conduct of the *Buddha* from his daughter-in-law, Yasodharā, the King, greatly perturbed in mind, hurried to the scene and, saluting the *Buddha*, said: "Son, why do you embarrass me? I am overwhelmed with shame to see you begging alms. Is it proper for you, who used to travel in a golden palanquin, to seek alms in this very city? Why do you put me to shame?"

"I am not putting you to shame, O great King! I am following the custom of my lineage," replied the *Buddha*, to the King's astonishment.

"But, dear son, is it the custom of my lineage to gain a livelihood by seeking alms? Surely, Lord, ours is the warrior lineage of Mahāsammata, and not a single warrior has gone seeking alms."

"O great King, this is not the custom of your royal lineage, but it is the custom of my *Buddha* lineage. *Buddhas* live by seeking alms."

Standing on the street, the *Buddha* then advised the King thus:

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[140] He saluted Him the first time when he saw the infant prince's feet rest on the head of the ascetic Asita whom he wanted the child to revere. His second salutation took place at the Plowing Festival, when he saw the young prince seated cross-legged on the couch, absorbed in meditation.

[141] This interesting story, which is the longest in the *Jātaka* Commentary, illustrates His unrivaled generosity.

"Do not be heedless in standing [at the door for alms]; scrupulously observe this practice. One who observes proper practice[142] *lives happily both in this world and the next."*[143]

Upon hearing this, the King realized the Truth and attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*). Immediately after, he took the *Buddha's* bowl and, leading the *Buddha* and His disciples to the palace, served them with choice food. At the close of the meal, the *Buddha* again exhorted the King as follows:

"Observe proper practice; do not observe improper practice.[144] *One who observes proper practice lives happily both in this world and the next."*[145]

Thereupon, the King attained the second stage of Sainthood (*Sakadāgāmī*), and Pajāpatī Gotamī attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*).

On a later occasion, when it was related to the *Buddha* that the King refused to believe that his son had died owing to His severe austerities without achieving His goal, the *Buddha* expounded the *Dhammapāla Jātaka* to show that, in a previous birth too, he refused to believe that his son had died, even though he was shown a pile of bones. This time, King Suddhodana attained the third state of Sainthood (*Anāgāmī*).

On his deathbed, the King listened to the *Dhamma* from the *Buddha* for the last time and attained Arahantship. After experiencing the bliss of Emancipation, he passed away as a lay *Arahant* when the *Buddha* was about forty years old.

The Buddha and Yasodharā

Princess Yasodharā, also known as Rāhulamātā, Bimbā, and Bhaddakaccānā, was the daughter of King Suppabuddha, who ruled Koliya, and Pamitā, sister of King Suddhodana. She was the same age as Prince Siddhattha, whom she married at the age of sixteen. It was by exhibiting His military prowess in an archery contest that Prince Siddhattha won her hand. She led an extremely happy and luxurious life. In her 29th year, on the very day that she gave birth to her only son, Rāhula, her wise and contemplative husband, whom she loved with all her heart, resolved to renounce the world to seek deliverance from the ills of life. Without bidding farewell to His faithful and charming wife, He left the palace at night, leaving young Yasodharā to look after the child by herself. She awoke as usual the following morning, but, to her surprise, when she went to greet her beloved husband, she found Him missing. When she realized that

[142] The Commentary states that proper practice (*dhammaṁ sucaritaṁ*) means stopping for alms at one house after another in the course of the alms-round except where it is not proper to go (such as the house of a prostitute).
[143] *Dhammapada*, XIII, The World, verse 168.
[144] Improper practice (*na naṁ duccaritaṁ*) means not observing the rules listed in footnote 142 above.
[145] *Dhammapada*, XIII, The World, verse 169.

her husband had left the palace, she was overcome with indescribable grief. Her most cherished possession was lost forever. The palace, with all its allurements, was now a dungeon to her. The whole world appeared blank. Her only consolation was her infant son.

Though several *Khattiya*[146] princes sought her hand, she rejected all of their proposals and lived ever faithful to her beloved husband. Hearing that her husband was living a hermit's life, she removed all her jewelry and wore a plain saffron-colored robe. Throughout the six years during which the Ascetic Gotama struggled for Enlightenment, Princess Yasodharā watched His actions from afar and did likewise.

When the *Buddha* visited Kapilavatthu after His Enlightenment and was being hosted by the King in the palace on the day following His arrival, all but the Princess Yasodharā came to pay reverence to Him. She thought: "Certainly, if there is any virtue in me, the noble Lord Himself will come to my presence. Then will I pay Him reverence."

After the meal was over, the *Buddha* handed over His bowl to the King and, accompanied by His two chief disciples, entered the chamber of Yasodharā and sat on a seat prepared for him, saying: "Let the King's daughter pay me reverence as she likes. Say nothing."

Hearing of the *Buddha's* visit, Yasodharā had directed the ladies in the court to wear saffron-colored garments. When the *Buddha* took His seat, Yasodharā came swiftly to Him and, gently clasping His ankles, placed her head at His feet and paid reverence to Him as she liked. After demonstrating her devotion and respect thus, she sat down with due reverence. Thereupon, the King praised her virtues and, commenting on her love and loyalty, said: "Lord, when my daughter-in-law heard that you were wearing saffron-colored robes, she also robed herself in saffron-colored robes; when she heard that you were taking one meal a day, she also did the same; when she heard that you had given up lofty couches, she lay on a low couch; when she heard that you had given up garlands and scents, she also gave them up; when her relatives sent messages to say that they would maintain her, she did not even look at one single one. Such is the virtue of my daughter-in-law."

Thereupon, the *Buddha* remarked, citing the *Candakinnara Jātaka*: "Not only in this present birth, O King, but in a previous birth too, she protected me and was devoted and faithful to me."

Recalling this past association with her, the *Buddha* comforted Yasodharā and then left the palace.

After the death of King Suddhodana, when Pajāpatī Gotamī became a nun (*Bhikkhunī*[147]), Yasodharā also entered the Order and attained Arahantship. Among

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[146] At the time of the *Buddha*, there were four main castes in India: (1) *Khattiya* (Sanskrit *Kṣatriya*), "Warrior Caste"; (2) *Brāhmaṇa* (in this book, the term "Brahmin" is used to denote a person of this caste, while the term *brāhmaṇa* is used to denote a "Saint"), "Priestly Caste"; (3) *Vessa* (Sanskrit *Vaiśya*), "Trading and Agricultural Caste"; and (4) *Sudda* (Sanskrit *Śūdra*), "Low Caste."

[147] Sanskrit *Bhikṣuṇī* (f.) "one who seeks alms, a mendicant, a Buddhist nun."

female disciples, she was the chief of those who attained great supernormal powers[148] (*abhiññā*). She passed away at the age of 78. Her name does not appear in the *Therīgāthā*, but her interesting verses are found in the *Apadāna*.[149]

The Buddha and Rāhula

Rāhula was the only son of Prince Siddhattha and Princess Yasodharā. He was born on the day when Prince Siddhattha decided to renounce the world. The happy news of the birth of His infant son was conveyed to Prince Siddhattha when He was in the park in a contemplative mood. Contrary to expectations, instead of rejoicing over the news, He exclaimed: *Rāhu jāto, bandhanaṁ jātaṁ*, "A 'Rāhu' is born, a fetter has arisen!" Accordingly, the child was named Rāhula[150] by King Suddhodana, his grandfather.

Rāhula was brought up as a fatherless child by his mother and grandfather. When he was seven years old, the *Buddha* visited Kapilavatthu for the first time after His Enlightenment. On the seventh day after His arrival, Princess Yasodharā dressed young Rāhula in fine clothes and, pointing to the *Buddha*, said: "Behold, son, that golden-colored ascetic, looking like Brahmā, surrounded by twenty thousand ascetics! He is your father, and He had great treasures. Since His renunciation, we do not see Him. Go up to Him and ask for your inheritance, saying: 'Father, I am the prince. After my consecration, I will be a universal monarch. Please give me my wealth, for the son is the owner of what belongs to the father.'"

Innocent Rāhula came to the *Buddha's* presence and, asking for his inheritance, as advised by his mother, very affectionately added: "O ascetic, even your shadow is pleasing to me."

After the meal, the *Buddha* left the palace, and Rāhula followed Him, saying: "Give me my inheritance" and uttering much else that was becoming. Nobody attempted to stop him, nor did the *Buddha* prevent Rāhula from following Him. Reaching the park, the *Buddha* thought: "He desires his father's wealth, but it goes with the world and is full of trouble. I shall give him the sevenfold noble wealth which I received at the foot of the *bodhi*-tree and make him the owner of a transcendental inheritance." The *Buddha* called upon Venerable Sāriputta to ordain little Rāhula. Thereupon, Rāhula, who was then only seven years old, was admitted into the Noble Order.

King Suddhodana was deeply grieved to hear of the unexpected ordination of his beloved grandson. He approached the *Buddha* and, in humbly requesting Him not to ordain anyone without the prior consent of his parents, said: "When the Lord renounced

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[148] The *Anguttara Nikāya* Commentary states: "Of one *Buddha*, four disciples only have great supernormal power. The rest can recall 100,000 *Kalpas*, but not beyond that; but those [four] recall incalculable eras. Under our Teacher's Order, the two Great Disciples [Sāriputta and Moggallāna] and the Elders Bakkula and Bhaddakaccānā [Yasodharā], just these four, had this power."

[149] *Khuddaka Nikāya*. Here, she relates her association with the *Bodhisatta* when He met the Buddha Dīpankara and resolved to become a *Buddha* Himself.

[150] Literally, "bound or seized (*la*) by a fetter (*rāhu*)."

the world, it was a cause of great pain to me. It was the same when Nanda renounced and especially so in the case of Rāhula. The love of a father towards a son cuts through the skin, the flesh, the sinew, the bone, and the marrow. Grant, Lord, the request that the Noble Ones may not confer ordination on a son without the permission of his parents." The *Buddha* readily granted his request and made it a *Vinaya* rule.

It is almost inconceivable how a boy of seven years could lead the Holy Life. But *Sāmaṇera*[151] Rāhula, cultured, exceptionally obedient, and well-disciplined as he was, was very eager to accept instruction from his superiors. It is stated that he would rise early in the morning and, taking a handful of sand, throw it into the air, saying: "Today may I receive from my instructors as much counsel as these grains of sand."

One of the earliest discourses preached to Rāhula, immediately after his ordination, was the Ambalaṭṭhikā-Rāhulovāda Sutta,[152] in which the *Buddha* emphasized the importance of truthfulness.

One day, the *Buddha* visited the Venerable Rāhula, who, seeing Him coming from afar, arranged a seat and supplied water for washing the feet. The *Buddha* washed His feet and, leaving a small quantity of water in the vessel, said:

> *"Do you see, Rāhula, this small quantity of water left in this vessel?"*
> *"Yes, Lord."*
> *"Similar, Rāhula, is the monkhood of those who are not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies."*

The *Buddha* then threw away the small quantity of water and said:

> *"Discarded, indeed, is the monkhood of those who are not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies."*

Next, the *Buddha* turned the vessel upside down and said:

> *"Overturned, indeed, is the monkhood of those who are not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies."*

Finally, the *Buddha* set the vessel upright and said:

> *"Empty and void, indeed, is the monkhood of those who are not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies.*
> *"I say of anyone who is not ashamed of uttering deliberate lies that there is no evil that could not be done by him. Accordingly, Rāhula, thus should you train yourself: 'Not even in play will I tell a lie'."*

[151] Buddhist Sanskrit *Śrāmaṇeraka* "novice."
[152] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Bhikkhuvagga, Ambalaṭṭhikā-Rāhulovāda Sutta, no. 61.

Emphasizing the importance of truthfulness with such homely illustrations, the *Buddha* explained to Rāhula the value of reflection and its criterion of morality in a way that a child could understand.

The *Buddha* then questioned Rāhula:

> *"Rāhula, for what purpose is a mirror?"*
>
> *"For the purpose of reflecting, Lord."*
>
> "*In like manner, Rāhula, only after reflecting should bodily action be done; only after reflecting should verbal action be done; only after reflecting should mental action be done.*
>
> *"Whatever action you desire to do with the body, of that particular bodily action, you should reflect: 'Now, this action that I desire to perform with the body, would this, my bodily action, be conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others?' Then, unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain.*
>
> *"If, when reflecting, you should realize: 'Now, this bodily action of mine that I desire to perform would be conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others.' Then, unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain. Such a bodily action you must on no account perform.*
>
> *"If, on the other hand, when reflecting you realize: 'Now, this bodily action that I desire to perform would conduce neither to my own harm, nor to the harm of others, nor to that of both myself and others.' Then, skillful is this bodily action, entailing pleasure and producing happiness. Such bodily action you should perform."*

Exhorting the Sāmaṇera Rāhula to use reflection during and after his actions, the *Buddha* said:

> *"While you are performing an action with the body, of that particular action, you should reflect: 'Now, is this action that I am performing with my body conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others?' Then, unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain.*
>
> *"If, when reflecting, you realize: 'Now, this action that I am performing with my body is conducive to my own harm, or to the harm of others, or to that of both myself and others.' Then, unskillful is this bodily action, entailing suffering and producing pain. From such a bodily action, you must desist!*
>
> *"If, when reflecting, you should realize: 'Now, this action that I am performing with my body is conducive neither to my own harm, nor to the harm of others, nor to that of both myself and others.' Then, skillful is this bodily action, entailing pleasure and producing happiness. Such bodily action you should perform again and again!"*

The *Buddha* added:

> *"If, when reflecting, you should realize: 'Now, this action that I have performed is unskillful.' Such an action should be confessed, revealed, and made manifest to the Teacher, or to the learned, or to your brothers of the Holy Life. Having confessed, you should acquire restraint in the future."*

The admonition with regard to skillful and unskillful verbal and mental actions was treated in the same way.

Stating that constant reflection was essential for purification, the *Buddha* ended the discourse as follows:

> *"Thus must you train yourself: by constantly reflecting shall we purify our bodily actions, by constantly reflecting shall we purify our verbal actions, by constantly reflecting shall we purify our mental actions."*

In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, there is a special chapter in which the *Buddha* explains to Sāmaṇera Rāhula the transitory nature of all things.

Inasmuch as Venerable Rāhula entered the Order in his boyhood, the *Buddha* availed Himself of every opportunity to advise and guide him on the right path. The *Sutta Nipāta*[153] states that the *Buddha* repeatedly admonished him with the following stanzas:

> *"Give up fivefold sensory pleasures — so sweet, so charming. Going forth from home life, with faith, be one who has put an end to suffering.*
>
> *"Seek a remote lodging, secluded and noiseless. Be moderate in food.*
>
> *"Have no attachment to robes, alms, requisites, and lodging.*
>
> *"Do not come to this world again.*
>
> *"Practice restraint with regard to the Fundamental Code and the five senses.*
>
> *"Cultivate mindfulness as regards the body, and be full of dispassionateness.*
>
> *"Avoid alluring, lust-provoking objects [of sense]. Develop your one-pointed, composed mind towards loathsomeness. Think not of the outward appearance of sense. Give up latent pride. Thus, eradicating pride, you shall fare on in perfect peace."*

When Venerable Rāhula was eighteen years old, the *Buddha* delivered a profound discourse on mental culture to him, the occasion for it being a sense-desire that had arisen in Venerable Rāhula's mind on account of his beautiful appearance. One day, Venerable Rāhula was following the *Buddha* in quest of alms. As the *Buddha* went along, followed

[153] *Sutta Nipāta*, Rāhula Sutta.

by Rāhula, it seems that the pair was like an auspicious royal elephant and its noble offspring, or a royal swan and its beauteous cygnet, or a regal lion and its stately cub. Both were golden in complexion, almost equal in beauty, both of the Warrior Caste; both had renounced a throne. Rāhula, admiring the Teacher, thought: "I, too, am handsome like my parent, the Exalted One. Beautiful is the *Buddha's* form, and mine is similar."[154]

The *Buddha* instantly read Rāhula's unwholesome thought and, looking back, addressed him thus: "Whatsoever form there is should be regarded thus: 'This is not mine; this am I not; this is not my Self'."

Rāhula submissively inquired of the *Buddha* whether he should only regard form as such.

The *Buddha* replied that he should regard all the five aggregates (*khandhas*) as such.

The Venerable Rāhula, having been admonished by the *Buddha*, preferred not to enter the village for alms. He turned back and sat at the foot of a tree, with crossed legs and body held erect, intent on mindfulness (*sati*).

Venerable Sāriputta, noting the meditative posture of Sāmaṇera Rāhula, advised him to concentrate on inhaling and exhaling, not knowing that he was practicing another subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) on the instruction of the *Buddha*.

Venerable Rāhula was perplexed, because he had been given two different subjects of meditation — one by the *Buddha* and one by his own teacher. In obedience to his teacher, he concentrated on "breathing." Afterwards, he went to the *Buddha* to get His instruction on the subject. As a wise physician would give the needed medicine, the *Buddha* first expanded His brief instruction on meditation on form and other aggregates, then briefly enumerated certain subjects of meditation with the specific unwholesome conditions temporarily eliminated by each, and finished by explaining the meditation on "breathing" (*ānāpānasati*).

Acting according to the *Buddha's* instructions, Venerable Rāhula succeeded in his meditations, and, before long, upon hearing the Cuḷa Rāhulovāda Sutta,[155] he attained Arahantship.

In the fourteenth year after the Enlightenment of the *Buddha*, Sāmaṇera Rāhula received his Higher Ordination.

He predeceased the *Buddha* and Venerable Sāriputta.

Venerable Rāhula was distinguished for his high level of discipline. The following verses are attributed to him in the *Theragāthā*:[156]

> *"Being fortunate from both sides, they call me 'Lucky Rāhula.' I was the son of the Buddha and that of the Seer of Truths. Destroyed are all my Corruptions. There is no more rebirth to me. An Arahant am I, worthy of offering. Possessed of threefold knowledge and a seer of Deathless am I."*

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[154] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Bhikkhuvagga, Mahā Rāhulovāda Sutta, no. 62.
[155] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Saḷāyatanavagga, Cuḷa Rāhulovāda Sutta, no. 147.
[156] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, Pārāyaṇavagga, *Theragāthā*, verses 297 and 298.

"Blinded by sense-desires, spread over by a net, covered by a cloak of craving bound by the 'kinsman of heedlessness' was I like a fish caught in the mouth of a funnel-net. That sense-desire have I burnt. The bond of Māra have I cut. Eradicating craving from its root, cool am I, peaceful am I now."

The Buddha and His Half-Brother Nanda

On the third day after the arrival of the *Buddha* at Kapilavatthu, Prince Nanda, the *Buddha's* half-brother, the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī, was celebrating his consecration ceremony, marriage ceremony, and house-warming ceremony. It was on the occasion of these three festivals, when congratulations were being offered to the prince, that the *Buddha* visited the palace. After the meal, the *Buddha* handed His bowl to Nanda and, uttering a blessing, rose to go, without taking back the bowl.

Prince Nanda followed the *Buddha*, thinking that He would take the bowl from him at any moment. But the *Buddha* did not take it, and Nanda, out of reverence for the *Buddha*, continued to follow Him.

Janapada Kalyāṇi, to whom Nanda was betrothed, hearing that he was following the *Buddha* with bowl in hand, with tears running down her cheeks and her hair half-combed, ran after Prince Nanda and said to him: "Return quickly, O noble Lord!" These affectionate words penetrated his heart, and he was deeply moved, but, out of deference to the *Buddha*, he could not possibly return without giving back the bowl to Him. So, he accompanied the *Buddha* to the park owned by Nigrodha, which was the *Buddha's* temporary residence. On arriving at the park, the *Buddha* questioned Nanda about whether he would become a monk. So great was Nanda's reverence for Him as the *Buddha* and as his elder brother that, with reluctance, he agreed to be admitted into the Order.

But Nanda Bhikkhu did not enjoy any spiritual happiness resulting from renunciation. He was greatly depressed and was constantly thinking of his bride. He related his mental anguish to the *Bhikkhus*, saying: "Brothers, I am dissatisfied, I am now living the Religious Life, but I cannot endure to live the Holy Life any longer. I intend to abandon the higher precepts and return to the lower life, the life of a layman."

Hearing about this, the *Buddha* questioned Venerable Nanda whether the report was true. Nanda admitted his weakness and stated that he was worried about his bride.

The *Buddha* then devised a means to set Nanda on the right path. With the object of showing him celestial nymphs, the *Buddha*, using His psychic powers, took Nanda to the Tāvatiṁsa Heaven. On the way, Venerable Nanda was shown a singed she-monkey who had lost her ears, nose, and tail in a fire, clinging to a burnt-up stump in a scorched field. Upon reaching the Tāvatiṁsa Heaven, the *Buddha* pointed to celestial nymphs and asked Nanda:

"Nanda, which do you regard as being the more beautiful and fair to look upon and the more enticing, your noble wife Janapada Kalyāṇi or the celestial nymphs?"

"Venerable Sir, Janapada Kalyāṇi is like the singed monkey when compared to these celestial nymphs, who are infinitely more beautiful and fair."

"Cheer up, Nanda. I guarantee that you will possess them if you continue as I instruct you."

"In that case, I shall take the greatest pleasure in living the Holy Life."

Hearing that Venerable Nanda was living the Holy Life with the object of winning celestial nymphs, the other *Bhikkhus* ridiculed him, calling him "hireling." Eventually, he became ashamed of his motive and, striving diligently, attained Arahantship. He thereupon approached the *Buddha* and said:

"Venerable Sir, I release the Holy One from the promise that He made when He guaranteed that I should win celestial nymphs."

To which the *Buddha* replied:

"When, Nanda, you ceased to cling to the things of this world and your heart was released from the Corruptions, at that moment, I released you from that promise."

The *Buddha* then uttered the following paean of joy:

"He who has crossed over the mud and crushed the thorn of lust; he who has destroyed delusion, such a man is unmoved, whether in pleasure or in pain."

When some of the *Bhikkhus* doubted Nanda's attainment of Arahantship, the *Buddha*, in explaining that he had indeed attained that exalted state, uttered the following stanzas:[157]

"Just as rain seeps through an ill-thatched roof, so does lust[158] *seep through an ill-trained mind.*[159]

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[157] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verses 13—14.

[158] Not only lust, but all defilements (*kilesa*). There are ten defilements, thus called because they are themselves defiled and because they defile the mental factors (*cetasika*) associated with them. They are: (1) greed (*lobha*); (2) hatred (*dosa*); (3) delusion (*moha*); (4) conceit (*māna*); (5) wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*); (6) speculative doubt (*vicikicchā*); (7) mental torpor (*thīna*); (8) restlessness (*middha*); (9) shamelessness (*ahirika*); and (10) lack of moral dread or unconscientiousness (*anottappa*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 103.

[159] A mind not cultivated in calm abiding (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) meditation.

"Just as rain cannot seep through a well-thatched roof, so can lust not seep through a well-trained mind."

Enjoying the bliss of Emancipation, Nanda praised the Teacher, saying: "O excellent is the method of the Master, whereby I was drawn out of the mire of rebirth and set on *nibbāna's* shore."

The *Theragāthā* attributes the following verses to Nanda:

"Through not reflecting rightly, I was attached to outward show. Overcome by passionate love, I was restless and fickle.

"Because of the skillful means devised by the Buddha, the 'Kinsman of the Sun,' I acted rightly and drew out my mind from existence."

Venerable Nanda was placed chief among disciples in respect of self-control.

The Buddha and Ānanda

Ānanda,[160] a cousin of Prince Siddhattha, was the son of Amitodana, a younger brother of King Suddhodana. Inasmuch as he was born bringing happiness to all his kinsmen, he was named Ānanda.

In the second year of the *Buddha's* ministry, Ānanda entered the Order along with the Sākyan nobles Anuruddha, Bhaddiya, Bhagu, Kimbila, and Devadatta. Not long after, upon hearing a discourse from the Venerable Punna Mantāniputta, Venerable Ānanda attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*).

[160] According to a story in the *Tipiṭaka*, Venerable Ānanda was a *paṇḍaka* in one of his previous lives. The Pāḷi term *paṇḍaka* has many meanings, and at least five, possibly six, different types of *paṇḍaka* are traditionally recognized. One type of *paṇḍaka*, specifically, an *āsittakapaṇḍaka*, refers to a man who gains satisfaction from performing oral sex on another man and from swallowing his semen or who only becomes sexually aroused after swallowing another man's semen, thus, a male homosexual. A second type, specifically, an *ussuyāpaṇḍaka*, refers to a voyeur, that is, a person who gains sexual satisfaction from watching others have sex. A third type, specifically, an *opakkamikapaṇḍaka*, refers to eunuchs, that is, men who have been castrated, and, who, consequently, lack sexual organs. A *lūnapaṇḍaka*, which denotes a man who has been intentionally castrated, is a variant of the third type. A fourth type, specifically, a *napuṁsakapaṇḍaka*, refers to a person with no clearly defined genitals, whether male or female, having only a urinary tract, that is, a "neuter," a person born without sexual organs. A fifth type, specifically, a *pakkhapaṇḍaka*, is the most controversial, since no one really knows for certain what is meant by the term. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu refers to this type of *paṇḍaka* as "a half-time *paṇḍaka*" — one who is only a *paṇḍaka* during the waning moon. Buddhaghosa says that a *pakkhapaṇḍaka* "becomes temporarily impotent for fourteen 'black days' of the month but regains his potency during the fourteen 'white days', that is, from the new to the full moon." Another interpretation is that *pakkhapaṇḍaka* refers to those with abnormal or uncontrollable desire for sexual intercourse, that is, what would nowadays be called a "sexaholic" or a "sex addict." In any case, it is only the last three types of *paṇḍaka* (*opakkamikapaṇḍaka* "a eunuch," *napuṁsakapaṇḍaka* "a person born without sexual organs," *pakkhapaṇḍaka* "a sex addict; a sexaholic; a satyr; a nymphomaniac") that are forbidden from being ordained, while no such restrictions are placed on the first two types (*āsittakapaṇḍaka* "male homosexual" and *ussuyāpaṇḍaka* "voyeur").

When the *Buddha* was fifty-five years old, Venerable Ānanda became His chief attendant.

During the first twenty years after His Enlightenment, the *Buddha* had no permanent attendant. The few temporary attendants were not very dutiful, and their behavior was not highly commendable. One day, while residing at Jetavana,[161] the *Buddha* addressed the *Bhikkhus* and said:

> *"Now I am old, Bhikkhus. When I say: 'Let us go this way,' some go by another way; some drop my bowl and robe to the ground. Choose out one disciple to attend upon me always."*[162]

Immediately, all of the *Bhikkhus*, from Venerable Sāriputta downward, volunteered their services, but the *Buddha* declined their kind offer. Since Venerable Ānanda had remained silent, he was urged by the *Bhikkhus* to offer his services as well. When asked, Ānanda replied that he would accept the position only if the *Buddha* agreed to the following eight conditions:

1. The *Buddha* should not give him robes which He Himself had received.
2. The *Buddha* should not give him food which He had received.
3. The *Buddha* should not allow him to dwell in the same Fragrant Chamber.
4. The *Buddha* should not take him with Him wherever the *Buddha* is invited.
5. The *Buddha* should kindly go with him wherever he is invited.
6. The *Buddha* should kindly give him permission to introduce visitors who came from afar to see the *Buddha*.
7. The *Buddha* should kindly grant him permission to approach Him whenever any doubt should arise.
8. The *Buddha* should kindly repeat to him any discourses that were spoken in his absence.

Without the slightest hesitation, the *Buddha* agreed to these four negative and four positive conditions. Thenceforth, Venerable Ānanda acted as His favorite attendant for twenty-five years, till the *Buddha's* last moment. Like a shadow, Venerable Ānanda followed the *Buddha* everywhere, attending to all His needs with great love and care. Both during day and night, his services were always at the disposal of his Master. At night, it is stated that Venerable Ānanda used to go round the *Buddha's* Fragrant

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[161] Literally, "Jeta's Grove" — Prince Jeta's pleasure park at Sāvatthī, which was bought for the use of the *Buddha* and His disciples by the millionaire Anāthapiṇḍika. The *Buddha* spent the better part of the last twenty-five years of His life at Sāvatthī at the Jetavana Monastery built by Anāthapiṇḍika.

[162] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, Pārāyaṇavagga, *Jātaka*, no. 456. The collection of *Jātakas*, "birth stories," forms the tenth book of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*. The *Jātakas* claim to be accounts of former lives of the *Buddha*. The collection consists of approximately 2500 verses arranged numerically. Originally, there were 550 *Jātakas*, but only 547 have survived, though the names and numbers of the lost *Jātakas* are still known. A long introduction, called *Nidānakathā*, precedes the *Jātakas* proper. In it, the life of the *Buddha* is told in prose interspersed with verses drawn from the *Buddhavaṁsa*, the fourteenth book of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*.

Chamber nine times with staff and torch in hand to keep himself awake and to prevent the *Buddha's* sleep from being disturbed.

Ānanda Bodhi-Tree

It was Venerable Ānanda who was responsible for the planting of the Ānanda *Bodhi*-Tree. Devout followers used to bring flowers and garlands, lay them at the entrance to the *Buddha's* Fragrant Chamber, and depart with much rejoicing. The millionaire Anāthapiṇḍika came to hear of this and requested Venerable Ānanda to ask the *Buddha* whether there was a possibility of finding a place where His devotees might pay reverence to the *Buddha* when He was away on His teaching tours. Consequently, Venerable Ānanda approached the *Buddha* and asked:

> *"Lord, how many objects of reverence are there, may it please you?"*
>
> *"There are three, Ānanda. They are objects of reverence pertaining to the body,*[163] *objects of reverence pertaining to personal use, and objects of reverence reminiscent of the Buddha."*
>
> *"Is it proper, Lord, to construct a cetiya*[164] *while you are alive?"*
>
> *"No, not an object of reverence pertaining to the body, which it is only proper to erect after the passing away of the Buddha. An object of reverence reminiscent of the Buddha has no physical basis — it is purely mental. But the great bodhi-tree, used by the Buddha, whether He is alive or dead, is an object of reverence."*
>
> *"Lord, when you go on your teaching tours, the great monastery at Jetavana is without refuge, and people find no object of reverence. Lord, may I bring a seed from the great bodhi-tree and plant it at the entrance to the Jetavana?"*
>
> *"Very well, Ānanda, plant it. It will then be as if I constantly abide in Jetavana."*

Venerable Ānanda mentioned this matter to the *Buddha's* principal lay supporters — Anāthapiṇḍika, Visākhā, and King Pasenadi of Kosala — and requested the Venerable Moggallāna to secure a seed from the great *bodhi*-tree. Venerable Moggallāna readily consented and obtained a seed from the tree and delivered it to Venerable Ānanda. Venerable Ānanda presented this to King Pasenadi, who then handed it to Anāthapiṇḍika. Thereupon, Anāthapiṇḍika stirred up the fragrant soil and dropped the seed in a hole that

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[163] Such as bodily relics of the *Buddha*.

[164] Sanskrit *caitya*, a *stūpa*; a burial mound containing the ashes or relics of an important person. At first, a *cetiya* was simply a mound of earth. Later, the mound was encased in bricks. Some are very small, while others are quite large. All are built on the same basic pattern. In Śri Lanka, a *cetiya* is called a "*dagoba*." In Nepal, they appeared early as pagodas and, from there, passed into China and Japan. In Tibet, a *cetiya* is called a "*chörten*." Cf. Christmas Humphreys, *A Popular Dictionary of Buddhism* (London: Curzon Press [1984]), p. 187.

had been dug. The tree that sprang up in that place was known as the Ānanda *Bodhi*-Tree.[165]

Ānanda, "Custodian of the Dhamma"

Inasmuch as he possessed a remarkably powerful memory, and inasmuch as he had the rare privilege of listening to all the discourses of the *Buddha* owing to his close association with Him, he was later appointed the Custodian of the *Dhamma* (*Dhamma-bhaṇḍagārika*). Referring to his own knowledge of the *Dhamma* in a reply to a question posed by a Brahmin, Venerable Ānanda said:[166]

> *"I recited eighty-two thousand from the Buddha and two thousand from the Bhikkhus. There exist eighty-four thousand discourses in all."*

The *Buddha* ranked Venerable Ānanda foremost among His disciples in five respects: erudition (*bahussutānam*), retentive memory (*satimantānam*), good behavior (*gatimantānam*), steadfastness (*dhitimantānam*), and ministering care (*upaṭṭhakānam*).[167]

Though a distinguished disciple, well-versed in the *Dhamma*, Venerable Ānanda lived as a "learner" (*sekha*) till the death of the *Buddha*. The *Buddha's* final exhortation to him was:

> *"You have done merit in the past, Ānanda. Quickly be free from corruptions."*[168]

It was only after the passing away of the *Buddha* that Venerable Ānanda attained Arahantship. Inasmuch as he was expected to take a leading part in the First Council, which was composed only of *Arahants*, he made a strenuous effort and attained Arahantship on the night preceding the Convocation, while he was about to lie down on his couch. It is thus stated that he was the only disciple to attain Arahantship free from the postures of sitting, standing, walking, or sleeping.

Venerable Ānanda passed away at the age of one hundred twenty. The *Dhammapada* Commentary states that, since people on both sides of the river Rohiṇī were of equal service to him and since both sides vied with each other to possess his relics, he sat cross-legged in the air over the middle of the river, preached the *Dhamma* to the crowds that had gathered, and wished that his body would split in two, with one part falling on the near side of the river and another on the far side. He then entered into the ecstatic meditation on the element of fire (*tejokasiṇa samāpati*). Instantly, flames of fire issued forth from his body, and, as willed, one portion of his body fell on the near side of the river and the other on the far side.

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[165] This ancient sacred tree is still to be seen at modern Sahet Mahet (Sāvatthī) in India.
[166] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, Pārāyaṇavagga, *Theragāthā*, verse 1424.
[167] *Anguttara Nikāya*, part I.
[168] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Parinibbāna Sutta.

The *Theragāthā* gives several stanzas uttered by Venerable Ānanda on various occasions. The following verses, which deal with the frailty of this so-called "beautiful body," are particularly interesting:[169]

> *"Behold this lovely body,*[170] *this mass of sores, supported by bones, subject to illness, highly thought of.*[171] *Indeed, this body is neither permanent nor enduring."*

Ānanda and Women

It was also Venerable Ānanda who persuaded the *Buddha* to admit women into the Order. Had it not been for his intervention, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī would not have succeeded in becoming a *Bhikkhunī*. The *Bhikkhunīs* held Venerable Ānanda in high esteem, and his sermons were greatly appreciated by them.

On one occasion, Venerable Ānanda approached the *Buddha* and asked Him:

> *"How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regard to women?"*
> *"As not seeing them, Ānanda."*
> *"But if we do see them, Lord, what are we to do?"*
> *"Do not talk to them, Ānanda."*
> *"But if they speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?"*
> *"Be watchful, Ānanda."*

This general exhortation was given to *Bhikkhus* so that they might constantly be watchful in their dealings with women.

The Buddha and Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī

Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī was the youngest sister of King Suppabuddha. Her elder sister was Queen Mahā Māyā. Both were married to King Suddhodana. She had a daughter named Nandā and a son named Nanda. Later, both of them entered the Order. When Mahā Māyā died, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī adopted her sister's son, Prince Siddhattha, entrusting her own son, Nanda, to the care of nurses.

Her family name was Gotamī, and she was named Mahā Pajāpatī because soothsayers predicted that she would be the head of a large following.

When the *Buddha* visited the palace and preached the *Dhammapāla Jātaka*, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī attained the first stage of Sainthood.[172]

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[169] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, Pārāyaṇavagga, *Theragāthā*, verse 1020; *Dhammapada*, XI, Old Age, verse 147.
[170] Made lovely, beautiful, attractive on account of clothing, jewelry, perfume, etc.
[171] As being good and pleasant.
[172] *Sotāpanna*.

After the death of King Suddhodana, since both Prince Siddhattha and Prince Nanda had renounced the world, she also decided to enter the Noble Order and lead the Holy Life. When the *Buddha* visited Kapilavatthu to settle a dispute between the Sākyas and Koliyas with regard to the irrigation of channels from the river Rohiṇī and was residing at the Nigrodha Park, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī approached the *Buddha* and begged Him to grant permission for women to enter the Order, thus:[173]

> *"It would be well, Lord, if women should be allowed to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata."*

Without stating His reasons, the *Buddha* instantly refused, saying:

> *"Enough, O Gotamī, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so."*

For the second and third time, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī repeated her request, and the *Buddha* gave the same reply.

Later, the *Buddha*, after having stayed at Kapilavatthu as long as He liked, traveled to Vesālī and, arriving there in due course, stayed at the Mahāvana in the Kūtāgāra Hall.

Resolute, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī, without being discouraged by the *Buddha's* refusal of her request, had her hair cut off, donned saffron-colored garments, and, accompanied by a great number of Sākyan ladies, walked from Kapilavatthu to Vesālī, a distance of about 150 miles, experiencing many hardships along the way. With swollen feet, her body covered with dust, she arrived at Vesālī and stood outside the porch of the Pinnacled Hall. Thereupon, Venerable Ānanda found her weeping and, learning the cause of her grief, approached the *Buddha* and said:

> *"Behold, Lord, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī is standing outside on the porch with swollen feet, body covered with dust, and sad. Please permit women to renounce home and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Exalted One. It would be well, Lord, if women were allowed to renounce their homes and enter the homeless state."*
>
> *"Enough, Ānanda, let it not please you that women should be allowed to do so."*

For the second and third time, Venerable Ānanda interceded on their behalf, but the *Buddha* would not yield. Thereupon, Venerable Ānanda tried a different approach and respectfully questioned the *Buddha*:

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[173] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part IV.

"Are women, Lord, capable of realizing the state of Stream-Winner (Sotāpanna), Once-Returner (Sakadāgāmī), Non-Returner (Anāgāmī), and Arahant when they have gone forth from home to the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Exalted One?"

The *Buddha* replied that they were indeed capable of realizing the four stages of Sainthood.

Encouraged by this favorable reply, Venerable Ānanda appealed again, saying:

"If then, Lord, they are capable of attaining Sainthood, since Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī had been of great service to the Exalted One, when, as aunt and nurse, she nourished Him and gave Him milk, and, on the death of His mother, suckled the Exalted One at her own breast, it would be well, Lord, if women were given permission to renounce the world and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata."

Finally yielding to the entreaties of Venerable Ānanda, the *Buddha* replied:

"If, Ānanda, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī accepts the Eight Chief Rules, let that be reckoned to her as the form of her ordination."

The Eight Chief Rules[174] are as follows:

1. A *Bhikkhunī*, even of a hundred years' standing by *upasampadā*,[175] should salute a *Bhikkhu*, rise up before him, reverence him, and perform all proper duties towards him, even if he had received the Higher Ordination that very day.
2. A *Bhikkhunī* should not spend a retreat (*vassa*) in a place where there is no *Bhikkhu*.
3. Every fortnight, a *Bhikkhunī* should ask from the Order of *Bhikkhus* the time of *Uposatha*[176] meeting and when a *Bhikkhu* will come to admonish them.
4. The *parāvaṇa*[177] ceremony after the Retreat should be held by a *Bhikkhunī* in the presence of both *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunīs* (to inquire whether, through the three ways of seeing, hearing, or suspicion, a wrong has been done).
5. A *Bhikkhunī* who has committed a major offense should undergo *mānatta*[178] discipline in the presence of both the Order of *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunīs*.
6. A female novice (*sikkhamānā*), who has trained in the Six Rules for two years, should receive the Higher Ordination from the Order of *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunīs*.
7. A *Bhikkhunī* should on no account rebuke or abuse a *Bhikkhu*.

[174] Some of these rules will not be intelligible to lay readers inasmuch as they pertain to *Vinaya* Discipline.
[175] The Higher Ordination.
[176] The full moon and new moon days when the *Bhikkhus* assemble to recite their Fundamental Rules.
[177] The formal termination of the rainy season.
[178] A form of disciplinary action.

8. Henceforth, *Bhikkhunīs* should not give admonition to *Bhikkhus*, but *Bhikkhus* should admonish *Bhikkhunīs*.

These rules are to be revered, reverenced, honored, and respected as long as life lasts and should not be transgressed.

When Venerable Ānanda mentioned them to Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī, she gladly agreed to abide by those Eight Chief Rules. Upon their acceptance, she automatically received the Higher Ordination.

In founding the Order of *Bhikkhunīs*, the *Buddha*, foreseeing the future repercussions, remarked:

> *"If, Ānanda, women had not received permission to renounce the world and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata, the Holy Life would have lasted long and the Sublime Dhamma would have survived for a thousand years. But, since women have entered the homeless state, the Holy Life will not last long, and the Sublime Dhamma will now remain only for five hundred years."*[179]

The *Buddha* added:

> *"Just as, Ānanda, houses in which there are many women and but few men are easily violated by burglars, even so, under whatsoever doctrine and discipline women are permitted to renounce the world and enter the homeless state, that Holy Life will not last long.*
>
> *"And, just as a man would, in anticipation, build an embankment to a great reservoir beyond which the water should not overflow, even so have I, in anticipation, laid down these Eight Chief Rules for the Bhikkhunīs, not to be transgressed throughout their lives."*[180]

In making these comments, which, in general, may not be very palatable to modern-day feminists, the *Buddha* was not in any way disparaging women but was only dealing with the realities of contemporary Indian society. Although, for very valid reasons, the *Buddha* only reluctantly permitted women to enter the Order, it should be noted that it was also the *Buddha* who, for the first time in the history of the world, founded an Order for women with rules and regulations. Just as the *Buddha* appointed two chief male disciples — Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna — for the Order of *Bhikkhus*, He appointed two chief female disciples — Venerable Khemā and Venerable Uppalavannā — for the Order of *Bhikkhunīs* as well.

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[179] *Vinaya Piṭaka*, Cullavaga, 10 (the ordination and instruction of *Bhikkhunīs*); *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part IV, 8:51.

[180] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part IV, 8.

One day, Bhikkhunī Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī approached the *Buddha* and invited Him to deliver a discourse so that she might strive alone and achieve her goal. To which, the *Buddha* declared:

> *"Of whatsoever doctrine you shall be conscious, O Gotamī, that these things lead to passion and not to peace, to pride and not to veneration, to wishing for much and not to wishing for little, to love of society and not to seclusion, to laziness and not to the exercise of zeal, to being difficult to satisfy and not to contentment, truly, may you then, O Gotamī, bear in mind: this is not Dhamma, this is not Vinaya, this is not the Teaching of the Master. But, of whatsoever doctrine you shall be conscious, O Gotamī, that these things lead to peace and not to passion, to veneration and not to pride, to wishing for little and not to wishing for much, to seclusion and not to love of society, to the exercise of zeal and not to laziness, to contentment and not to being difficult to satisfy, truly, may you then bear in mind: this is Dhamma, this is Vinaya, this is the Teaching of the Master."*[181]

Before long, Venerable Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī attained Arahantship, accompanied by intuitive and analytical knowledge (*paṭisambhidā*).[182]

The other Sākyan women, who had received their ordination at the same time as Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī, also attained Arahantship in due course.

Among female disciples, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī was assigned the foremost place in seniority and experience (*rattaññu*). Several verses uttered by her after she attained Arahantship appear in the *Therīgāthā*. ■

Further Reading

Nārada Mahāthera. 1988. *The Buddha and His Teachings*. 4th edition. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society.

Nyanaponika Thera and Hellmuth Hecker. 1997. *Great Disciples of the Buddha: Their Lives, Their Works, Their Legacy*. Edited with an Introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

[181] *Vinaya Piṭaka*, Part III, Parivāra.

[182] Analytical knowledge with regard to the meaning (*attha*), texts (*dhamma*), etymology (*nirutti*), and the understanding of these three (*paṭibhāna*).

9

The Buddha's Chief Opponents And Supporters

"As a solid rock cannot be moved by the wind, the wise are not shaken[183] *by praise or blame."*[184] [185]

"There is an old saying, Atula[186] *— it is not just of today: 'People will blame you if you say too much; they will blame you if you say too little; they will blame you if you say just enough.' No one escapes blame in this world.*

"There never was, there never will be, nor is there now anyone who receives all praise or all blame."[187]

Introduction

The *Buddha* worked disinterestedly for the welfare of mankind, making no distinction between the rich and the poor, the high and the low. His followers and supporters were drawn both from the highest and lowest rungs of the social ladder. So spontaneous was the love and so profound was the veneration of the people that kings and nobles, millionaires and paupers, the pious and courtesans, men and women of every imaginable caste, class, and social condition, vied with one another to be of service to Him and to make His noble mission a success. The wealthy spent lavishly to erect suitable monasteries for Him, while the poor, full of faith, demonstrated their piety in their humble way. With perfect equanimity, He accepted the gifts of the rich and the poor, but showed no partiality to any. Nevertheless, He showed more compassion to the

[183] Not perturbed or bothered.
[184] When they are confronted by the eight worldly conditions, the wise are neither attracted nor repulsed, neither happy nor sad, neither elated nor depressed. To them, things and events simply are what they are, no more, no less. The eight worldly conditions are: (1) gain (*lābha*) and (2) loss (*alābha*); (3) fame (*yasa*) and (4) infamy or ill-repute (*ayasa*); (5) praise (*paraṁsā*) and (6) blame (*nindā*); and (7) happiness (*sukha*) and (8) pain (*dukkha*).
[185] *Dhammapada*, VI, The Wise, verse 81.
[186] Atula was a *Bhikkhu* who stood at the door for alms without asking.
[187] *Dhammapada*, XVII, Anger, verses 227—228.

poor and the lowly. Like a bee that extracts honey from a flower without hurting it, He lived among His followers and supporters without causing the slightest inconvenience to any. Offerings of diverse kinds were showered upon Him, and He accepted them all with perfect non-attachment.

Though absolutely pure in motive and perfectly selfless in His service to humanity, yet, in preaching and spreading His Teaching, the *Buddha* had to contend with strong opposition. He was severely criticized, roughly abused, insulted and ruthlessly attacked, as no other religious leader had been. His chief opponents were ordinary teachers whose traditional doctrines and superstitious rites and ceremonies He justly criticized. His greatest personal enemy, who made a vain attempt to kill Him, was His own brother-in-law and former disciple, Devadatta.

The Buddha and Devadatta

Devadatta was the son of King Suppabuddha and Pamitā, an aunt of the *Buddha*. Yasodharā was his sister. He was thus both a cousin and brother-in-law of the *Buddha*. He entered the Order in the early part of the *Buddha's* ministry, together with Ānanda and other Sākyan Princes. He could not attain any of the stages of Sainthood but was distinguished for possessing worldly psychic powers (*pothujjanika-iddhi*). One of his chief supporters was King Ajātasattu, who built a monastery for him.

During the early part of his career, Devadatta led such an exemplary life that even Venerable Sāriputta went about Rājagaha praising him. Later, overcome by the desire for worldly gain and honor, and growing jealous of the *Buddha*, Devadatta became so radically changed in his character that he proved to be the greatest personal enemy of the *Buddha*. Simultaneous with the arising of ill will in his heart towards the *Buddha*, his psychic powers ceased.

Despite his evil ways and corrupt life, he had a large following and many admirers, and some even preferred him to Venerable Sāriputta.

On one occasion, Devadatta approached the *Buddha* and asked Him to hand over the leadership of the *Sangha* to him inasmuch as the *Buddha* was advanced in age. The *Buddha* immediately refused, saying: "I would not even hand over the [leadership of the] *Sangha* to Sāriputta or Moggallāna. Why, then, would I hand it over to you?" Devadatta was enraged at this refusal and vowed vengeance. To safeguard and maintain the dignity of the *Sangha*, the *Buddha* made a proclamation that Devadatta alone was responsible for anything done by him in the name of the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, or the *Sangha*.

Devadatta therefore conspired with King Ajātasattu to kill the *Buddha*. Ajātasattu was advised to kill his father and usurp the throne, while Devadatta decided to kill the *Buddha* and lead the *Sangha*. The ungrateful Ajātasattu succeeded in killing his devout father, King Bimbisāra, and Devadatta hired bowmen to kill the *Buddha*, but, contrary to his expectations, the bowmen became followers of the *Buddha*. Foiled in his attempt, he decided to kill the *Buddha* himself. When the *Buddha* was walking back and forth in the shade of the Vulture Peak, Devadatta climbed the Peak and mercilessly hurled a rock at

the *Buddha*. Fortunately, it struck another piece of rock, and a splinter slightly wounded the *Buddha's* foot, causing blood to flow. Jīvaka the physician attended on the *Buddha* and healed Him.

Devadatta made another unsuccessful attempt to kill the *Buddha* by dispatching the elephant Nālāgiri, after getting him intoxicated with liquor, to trample the Teacher. When the ferocious elephant approached the *Buddha*, Venerable Ānanda stepped forward to sacrifice his own life for the sake of his Master, but the *Buddha* subdued the beast through the power of His loving-kindness (*mettā*).

After this last wicked act, Devadatta became extremely unpopular, and public opinion was so much against him that King Ajātasattu was compelled to withdraw his support. Devadatta fell into disrepute, and his followers decreased.

Devadatta now decided to live by deceit. His fertile brain devised another seemingly peaceful plan. With the help of equally evil-minded *Bhikkhus* like Kokālika, he thought of causing a schism in the Order.

He asked the *Buddha* to enforce the following five rules among the *Bhikkhus*:

1. That monks should dwell their entire lives in the forest.
2. That they should live on alms begged.
3. That they should only wear *paṁsukūla* robes.[188]
4. That they should live at the foot of a tree.
5. That they should not eat fish or flesh throughout their life.

This he did, knowing full well that the *Buddha* would not agree to these rules. Devadatta wanted to make the *Buddha's* refusal a pretext for disparaging the *Buddha* and thereby winning the support of the ignorant masses.

When this request was made, the compassionate and tolerant *Buddha* declared that His disciples were free to adopt these rules or not, but He would not make them compulsory for all.

Devadatta then made this refusal a cause for schism in the Order. He appealed to the *Bhikkhus*, saying: "Brothers, whose words are nobler, the words of the *Tathāgata* or the words which I myself have uttered? Whoever desires release from suffering, let him come with me."

A number of newly-ordained *Bhikkhus*, who were not yet conversant with the *Dhamma*, apparently approved of his demands and went over to him. Accompanied by them, Devadatta went to Gayāsisa. But Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna, on the advice of the *Buddha*, went there and succeeded in winning these *Bhikkhus* back, after explaining the *Dhamma* to them.

Thereafter, evil days fell upon Devadatta. He became grievously ill, and, before his death, he sincerely repented and desired to see the *Buddha*. But his bad *kamma* interfered, and he died a miserable death. However, he sought refuge in the *Buddha* at the last moment.

[188] That is, robes made from rags collected from the dust-heap and cemeteries.

Although he suffers in a woeful state for his heinous crimes, yet, as a result of the Holy Life he led during the early part of his career, it is stated that he will become a *Pacceka Buddha* named Aṭṭhissara in the distant future.

Anāthapiṇḍika

The chief supporter of the *Buddha* was Anāthapiṇḍika the millionaire. Among the *Buddha's* lay followers, he was considered the foremost alms-giver (*dāyaka*).

The original name of Anāthapiṇḍika, which means "Feeder of the helpless," was Sudatta. Owing to his unparalleled generosity, he was subsequently known by his new name. His birthplace was Sāvatthī.

One day, Sudatta visited his brother-in-law in Rājagaha to transact some business. His brother-in-law did not come forward as usual to welcome him. Instead, Sudatta found him in the backyard making preparations for a feast. On inquiry, to his indescribable joy, he learned that these arrangements were being made to entertain the *Buddha* on the following day. The utterance of the mere word "*Buddha*" roused his interest, and he longed to see Him. Since he was told that the *Buddha* was living nearby in the Sītavana Forest and that he could see Him the following morning, Sudatta went to bed. However, his desire to see the *Buddha* was so intense that he could not sleep, and he arose at an unusual hour in the morning to set out for the Sītavana Forest. It appears that his faith in the *Buddha* was so intense that a light emanated from his body. On his way to the Sītavana Forest, he had to pass through a cemetery. It was pitch dark. He became afraid and thought of turning back. Then Sīvaka, a Yakkha, himself invisible, encouraged Sudatta, saying:[189]

"A hundred elephants and horses too,
Aye, and a hundred chariots drawn by mules,
A hundred thousand maidens, with bejeweled rings
In their ears — all are not worth
The sixteenth fraction of a single stride.
Advance, O citizen, go forward!
Advance for you is better than retreat."

Thereupon, his fear vanished, and faith in the *Buddha* arose in its place. The light appeared again, and he courageously hurried on his way. Nevertheless, the same thing happened a second time and yet a third time. Ultimately, he reached the Sītavana Forest, where the *Buddha* was pacing back and forth in the open air anticipating Sudatta's visit. The *Buddha* addressed him by his family name, Sudatta, and called him to His presence.

[189] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Part I.

Anāthapiṇḍika was pleased to hear the *Buddha* address him in this manner and respectfully inquired whether the *Buddha* had rested happily. The *Buddha* replied:[190]

> *"Surely, the Arahant in whom all fire is extinct rests happily at all times. Calm is the entire being of he who does not cling to sensory desires. Rid of all the seeds that bring new life, all encumbrances cut out, subdued the pain and pining of the heart, calm and serene, he rests happily, for, in his mind, he has attained to peace."*

Hearing the *Dhamma*, Anāthapiṇḍika became a *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Winner) and invited the *Buddha* to spend the rainy season at Sāvatthī. The *Buddha* accepted the invitation, suggesting that *Buddhas* take pleasure in solitude. Anāthapiṇḍika returned to Sāvatthī, bought the park belonging to Prince Jeta at a price determined, so the story goes, by covering the site with a hundred thousand gold coins. However, there were not quite enough coins to cover the entire area, and a small space near the gate remained uncovered. Anāthapiṇḍika ordered that more gold coins be fetched to complete the task. Whereupon, Prince Jeta told him that there was no need to cover the space since it would be his gift. Anāthapiṇḍika erected the famous Jetavana Monastery on the site at a great cost. Here, the *Buddha* spent nineteen rainy seasons. This monastery, where the *Buddha* spent a major part of His life, was the place where He delivered many of His discourses.

At one time, the *Buddha*, discoursing on generosity, reminded Anāthapiṇḍika that alms given to the Order of monks, together with the *Buddha*, is very meritorious; but more meritorious than such alms is the building of a monastery for the use of the Order; more meritorious than building such monasteries is seeking refuge in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*; more meritorious than seeking refuge in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha* is the observance of the five precepts; more meritorious than such observance is meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā*) for a moment; and most meritorious of all is the development of Insight (*vipassanā*) into the fleeting nature of all things.[191]

It is evident from this discourse that generosity (*dāna*) is the first stage on the way to the Buddhist life. More important than generosity is taking refuge (*saraṇa*) in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*. More important than taking refuge is the observance of at least the five rules (*pañca-sīla*) regulating behavior, which tend to the disciplining of words and deeds. Still more important and more beneficial is the cultivation of such ennobling virtues as loving-kindness (*mettā*), which lead to self-development. Most important and most beneficial of all self-discipline is the sincere effort to understand things as they truly are.

Commenting on the four kinds of joy, or happiness (*sukha*), that a lay follower may experience, the *Buddha* declared:[192]

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[190] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Part I.
[191] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part IV.
[192] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part II.

"There are four kinds of joy to be gained by the householder who enjoys sensory pleasures from time to time, when occasion offers — the joy of ownership (atthisukha), the joy of wealth (bhogasukha), the joy of debtlessness (ananasukha), and the joy of blamelessness (anavajjasukha).

"What is the joy of ownership? Herein, a clansman has wealth acquired by earnest striving, amassed by strength of arm, gained by sweat, lawful, and lawfully gotten. At the thought, 'Wealth is mine, acquired by energetic striving, lawfully,' joy comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This is called 'the joy of ownership.'

"What is the joy of wealth? Herein, a clansman, by means of wealth acquired by energetic striving, both enjoys his wealth and does meritorious deeds with it. At the thought, 'By means of wealth acquired, I both enjoy my wealth and do meritorious deeds,' joy comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This is called 'the joy of wealth.'

"What is the joy of debtlessness? Herein, a clansman owes no debt, great or small, to anyone. At the thought, 'I owe no debt, great or small, to anyone,' joy comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This is called 'the joy of debtlessness.'

"What is the joy of blamelessness? Herein, a noble disciple is blessed with blameless action of body, blameless action of speech, and blameless action of mind. At the thought, 'I am blessed with blameless action of body, speech, and mind,' joy comes to him, satisfaction comes to him. This is called 'the joy of blamelessness.'

"Experiencing the joy of debtlessness, a man may then recall the joy of really having. When he experiences the joy of wealth, he sees that it is such by wisdom. When he sees, he knows. Thus is he wise, indeed, in both respects. But these do not have one-sixteenth of the joy [that comes to a man] of blamelessness."

On another occasion, when the *Buddha* visited the house of Anāthapiṇḍika, He heard an unusual uproar in the house and asked Anāthapiṇḍika what the commotion was all about. Anāthapiṇḍika replied:

"Lord, it is Sujātā, my daughter-in-law, who lives with us. She is rich and has been brought here from a wealthy family. She pays no heed to her mother-in-law or her father-in-law, nor to her husband. Neither does she venerate, reverence, honor, nor respect the Exalted One."

The *Buddha* called her to His presence and preached an illuminating discourse[193] on seven kinds of wives that exist even in modern society as it was in days of old.

[193] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part IV.

"Whosoever is wicked in mind, ill-disposed, pitiless, fond of other [men], neglecting husband, a prostitute, bent on harassing, such a one is called 'a 'troublesome wife.'

"Whosoever wishes to squander whatever profit, though little, that the husband gains, whether by craft, trade, or plow, such a one is called 'a thievish wife.'

"Whosoever is not inclined to anything, who is lazy, gluttonous, harsh, cruel, and fond of bad speech, who is domineering and unremitting, such a one is called 'a lordly wife.'

"Whosoever is ever kind and compassionate, who protects her husband as a mother would protect her son, who guards the accumulated wealth of her husband, such a one is called 'a motherly wife.'

"Whosoever is respectful towards her husband, just as a younger sister towards her elder brother, who is modest, who lives in accordance with her husband's wishes, such a one is called 'a sisterly wife.'

"Whosoever rejoices at the sight of her husband, even as a friend on seeing a companion who has come after a long time, who is of noble birth, virtuous, and chaste, such a one is called 'a friendly wife.'

"Whosoever, when threatened with harm and punishment, is not angry but calm, who endures all things of her husband with no wicked heart, who is free from hatred, who lives in accordance with her husband's wishes, such a one is called 'a handmaid wife'."

The *Buddha*, describing the characteristics of seven kinds of wives, remarked that, of them, the troublesome wife (*vadhakabhariyā*), the thievish wife (*corabhariyā*), and the lordly wife (*ayyabhariyā*) are bad and undesirable ones, while the motherly wife (*mātubhariyā*), the sisterly wife (*bhaginibhariyā*), the friendly wife (*sakhībhariyā*), and the handmaid wife (*dāsibhariyā*) are good and praiseworthy ones.

"These, Sujātā, are the seven kinds of wives a man may have; and which of them are you?"

"Lord, let the Exalted One think of me as the handmaid wife from this day forward."

Anāthapiṇḍika used to visit the *Buddha* daily and, finding that people would go away disappointed when the *Buddha* was not present, wished to know from Venerable Ānanda whether there was a possibility for the devout followers to pay their respects when the *Buddha* went out on His preaching tours. The matter was reported to the *Buddha*, with the result that the Ānanda *Bodhi*-tree, which stands to this day, was planted at the entrance to the monastery.

Puññalakkhaṇā, a very virtuous lady, was Anāthapiṇḍika's wife. Mahā Subhaddā, Cūḷā Subhaddā, and Sumanā were his three devout daughters. The two elder daughters attained *Sotāpanna*, while the younger was a *Sakadāgāmī*. His only son, Kāla, who at

first had no interest in religion, later became a *Sotāpanna* through the skillfulness of his father.

Anāthapiṇḍika breathed his last breath after hearing a profound discourse from Venerable Sāriputta.

As he was about to die, Anāthapiṇḍika sent a messenger to inform the *Buddha* that he was seriously ill and that he paid his homage to Him and then to request Venerable Sāriputta to have compassion on him and to visit him in his house. As invited, Venerable Sāriputta, accompanied by Venerable Ānanda, proceeded to Anāthapiṇḍika's house and asked him about his health. Anāthapiṇḍika replied that he was in acute pain and saw no signs of progress. Venerable Sāriputta then preached a profound discourse. Tears came to Anāthapiṇḍika's eyes at the end of the discourse. Seeing him in tears, Venerable Ānanda asked him whether he was sinking. Anāthapiṇḍika then answered: "Not at all, Venerable Sir. Though I have long attended on the Master and His disciples, never did I hear such a discourse."

"Such discourses are not taught to the white-robed lay followers inasmuch as they cannot comprehend their meaning, but are reserved for advanced disciples," replied Venerable Sāriputta. But Anāthapiṇḍika begged Venerable Sāriputta to expound such intricate *Dhamma* to the laity as well, for there would be some who could understand.

Not long before the departure of these two great disciples, Anāthapiṇḍika passed away and was immediately reborn in Tusita heaven.

Later that night, the *deva* who had been Anāthapiṇḍika, illuminating the whole Jeta Grove, came up to the *Buddha*, saluted Him, and, extolling the virtues of Venerable Sāriputta, expressed his pleasure on seeing the *Buddha* and His disciples residing in the monastery, and said:

> *"Oh blessed is this Jeta's Grove, dwelt in by the sagely Sangha, wherein resides the King of Dhamma, the fount of all my happiness.*
>
> *"By action, knowledge, and Dhamma; by virtue and noble way of life — by these are mortals purified, not by lineage or wealth.*
>
> *"Therefore, a wise person who sees what truly leads to his own good should investigate the Dhamma and purify himself with it.*
>
> *"Sāriputta has reached the peak in virtue, peace, and wisdom's ways; any Bhikkhu who has gone beyond at best can only equal him."*

Visākhā

Visākhā was the devout and generous daughter of the millionaire Dhanañjaya. Her mother was Sumanā Devī, and her beloved grandfather was the millionaire Meṇḍaka.

When she was only seven years old, the *Buddha* happened to visit her birthplace, Bhaddiya, in the kingdom of Anga. Her grandfather, hearing of the *Buddha's* visit, said to her: "Dear girl, this is a happy day for you and a happy day for me. Summon the five

hundred maidens who are your attendants, mount five hundred chariots, and, accompanied by your five hundred maidservants, go forth to welcome the *Buddha*."

She readily agreed and, as advised, went up to the *Buddha*, saluted Him, and sat respectfully at one side. The *Buddha* was pleased with her refined manners, and He preached the *Dhamma* to her and others. Though young in age, she was comparatively far advanced from a moral standpoint. As such, immediately after hearing the *Dhamma*, she attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*) at her young age.

It is stated that, even in the prime of her youth, she possessed extraordinary poise and was gifted with all womanly charms. Her hair was like a peacock's tail, and, when loosened, it reached the hem of her skirt, and then the ends of the hair curled and turned upwards. Her lips were of a bright red color and were smooth and soft to the touch. Her teeth were white and were evenly set without gaps between them and shown like a row of diamonds. Her skin, without the use of any cosmetics, was as smooth as a blue lotus-wreath and was of a golden color. She retained her youthful appearance although she bore several children.

Endowed with these five kinds of feminine beauty — hair, flesh, bone, skin, and youth —, young Visākhā excelled in worldly wisdom and spiritual insight.

When she was about fifteen or sixteen years old, on a certain festival day, she went on foot with her retinue in a holiday spirit to the river to bathe. Suddenly, there arose an unexpected shower, and all but young Visākhā ungraciously ran as fast as they could and took shelter in a hall where there were some Brahmins who had come in search of a suitable maiden possessed of the five kinds of feminine beauty for their young master. Cultured Visākhā, without any particular haste, graciously proceeded at her usual pace and entered the hall with garments and ornaments soaking wet. The inquisitive Brahmins criticized her for not running as the others had done to escape being drenched by the rain.

Talented Visākhā rose to the occasion and gave an impromptu speech on deportment according to her view. She said that she could have run even faster, but she had purposely refrained from doing so. Then, she explained that it was not becoming for a King, adorned with all his finery, to gird up his loins and run in the palace court. Likewise, it was not becoming for a fully-outfitted state elephant to run — it should move about with the natural grace of an elephant. Monks also incur criticism when they run about like ordinary laymen. In like manner, it is not a dignified spectacle to see a woman running about like a man.

The Brahmins were pleased with her instructive speech and thought that she was an ideal wife for their master. Accordingly, arrangements were made to give her in marriage to their master, Puṇṇavaddhana, himself the son of a millionaire named Migāra, who was not a follower of the *Buddha*.

The marriage festival was conducted on an elaborate scale. On the wedding day, in addition to a large dowry and an exquisitely rich ornament, her father gave her the following advice:

1. Do not carry outside the indoor fire.[194]
2. Do not take inside the outdoor fire.
3. Give only to those who give.
4. Do not give to those who do not give.
5. Give both to those who give and do not give.
6. Sit happily.
7. Eat happily.
8. Sleep happily.
9. Tend the fire.
10. Honor the household divinities.

Their implied meaning is as follows:

1. The wife should not speak ill of her husband and parents-in-law to others. Neither should their shortcomings nor household quarrels be reported elsewhere.
2. A wife should not listen to the reports and stories of other households.
3. Things should be lent to those who return them.
4. Nothing should be lent to those who do not return them.
5. Poor relatives should be helped even if they do not repay.
6. A wife should sit in a becoming way. On seeing her parents-in-law or her husband, she should keep standing and not sit.
7. Before partaking of her meals, a wife should first make sure that her parents-in-law and husband are served. She should also ensure that her servants are well cared for.
8. Before going to bed, a wife should make sure that all doors are closed, furniture is safe, servants have performed their duties, and that parents-in-law have retired. As a rule, a wife should rise early in the morning, and, unless unwell, she should not sleep during the day.
9. Parents-in-law and husband should be regarded as fire. One should deal carefully with them as one would deal with a fire.
10. Parents-in-law and husband should be regarded as divinities. It is noteworthy that the *Buddha* himself refers to parents-in-law as divinities (*sassudevā*).

On the day that she arrived in Sāvatthī, the city where her husband lived, she was showered with various presents sent from people of all ranks, according to their status and ability. But so kind and generous was she that she distributed them among the donors themselves with a kind message and treated all the residents of the city as if they were her own relatives. By this noble gesture on the very first day that she came to her husband's home, she became endeared to all the people of the city.

There is an incident in her life that reveals her dutiful kindness even towards animals. Hearing that her well-bred mare had given birth to a foul in the middle of the

[194] Here, "fire" signifies slandering.

night, she went to the stable with her female attendants bearing torches in their hands and attended to all the mare's needs with the greatest care and attention.

Inasmuch as her father-in-law was a staunch follower of Niganṭha Nātaputta,[195] he invited a large number of naked ascetics to his house for alms. On their arrival, Visākhā was requested to come and render homage to these so-called "*Arahants*." She was delighted to hear the word "*Arahant*" and hurried to the hall only to see naked ascetics devoid of all modesty. The sight was too unbearable for a refined lady such as Visākhā. She reproached her father-in-law and retired to her quarters without entertaining them. The naked ascetics took offense and found fault with the millionaire for having brought a female follower of the *Buddha* to his house. They asked him to expel Visākhā from the house immediately.

The millionaire pacified them. One day, he sat on a costly seat and began to eat some sweet rice porridge from a golden bowl. At that moment, a *Bhikkhu* came to the house seeking alms. Visākhā was fanning her father-in-law and, without informing him of the *Bhikkhu's* presence, moved aside so that he might see the *Bhikkhu*. Although he saw the *Bhikkhu*, he continued eating as if he had not seen him.

Visākhā politely told the *Bhikkhu*: "Pass on, Venerable Sir, my father-in-law is eating stale food."

The ignorant millionaire, misconstruing her words, was so provoked that he ordered the bowl to be removed and Visākhā to be expelled from the house. However, Visākhā was the favorite of everyone in the house, and, so, nobody dared to touch her.

But Visākhā, disciplined as she was, would not accept without protest such treatment even from her father-in-law. She politely said:

> *"Father, this is not a sufficient reason why I should leave your house. I was not brought here by you like a slave girl from some ford. Daughters, whose parents are alive, do not leave like this. It is for this very reason that my father, when I set out to come here, summoned eight clansmen and entrusted me to them, saying: 'If there be any fault in my daughter, investigate it.' Send word to them and let them judge my guilt or innocence."*

The millionaire agreed to her proposal and, summoning them, said:

> *"At a time of festivity, while I was sitting eating sweet milk-rice porridge from a golden bowl, this girl said that what I was eating was unclean. Convict her of this offense and expel her from this house."*

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[195] Niganṭha Nātaputta, also known as Mahāvīra, systematized Jainism. He was a contemporary of the *Buddha*. Jainism is an orthodox Indian religion that rejects the authority of the Vedas. Jains do not believe in God. Their religion teaches that divinity resides in every soul, and perfect souls are venerated as the Supreme Spirit. Liberation is attained through right belief, right knowledge, and right action, whereby the practice of harmlessness towards all living beings is particularly stressed. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), pp. 158—159.

Visākhā proved her innocence, stating:

> *"That is not precisely what I said. When a certain Bhikkhu was standing at the door for alms, my father-in-law was eating sweet milk-rice porridge ignoring him. Thinking to myself that my father-in-law, without performing any good deeds in this life, was only consuming the merits of past deeds, I told the Bhikkhu: 'Pass on, Venerable Sir, my father-in-law is eating stale food'."*

She was acquitted of the charge, and the father-in-law himself agreed that she was not guilty.

But the spiteful millionaire accused her again for having gone behind the house with male and female attendants in the middle watch of the night. When she explained that she actually did so in order to attend on a mare in labor, the clansmen remarked that their noble daughter had performed an exemplary act, which even a slave-girl would not do. She was thus acquitted of the second charge too.

But the vengeful millionaire would not rest until she was found guilty of some charge. The next time, he found fault with her for no wrong of hers. He said that, before her departure from home, her father gave her ten admonitions. For instance, he said to her: "The indoor fire should not be taken out of doors." "Is it really possible to live without giving fire even to our neighbors on both sides of us?", questioned the millionaire. Thereupon, Visākhā took the opportunity to explain all ten admonitions in detail to his entire satisfaction. The millionaire was silenced, and he had no other charges to make.

Having proved her innocence, self-respecting Visākhā now desired to leave the house as she was ordered to do at first.

The millionaire's attitude toward Visākhā was completely changed, and he was compelled to seek her forgiveness for the charges he had made against her. Forbearing Visākhā, in accordance with her true Buddhist spirit, granted him pardon on condition that he would give her complete freedom to carry on her religious activities as she desired. Her father-in-law readily agreed to this and granted her full freedom to perform her religious activities.

Now, Visākhā lost no time in inviting the *Buddha* to the house for alms. The *Buddha* came and had His meal. After the meal was over, the *Buddha* delivered a discourse. The millionaire was sitting behind a curtain and heard the discourse. At the end of the discourse, he became a *Sotāpanna*. Thereupon, he acknowledged his boundless gratitude to his daughter-in-law for having initiated him into the True Path of Deliverance and emotionally proclaimed that he would henceforth regard Visākhā as his mother.

Later on, when she bore a son, Visākhā named him Migāra.

On the following day, the *Buddha* visited her house, and, on that occasion, her mother-in-law heard the *Dhamma* and became a *Sotāpanna*.

By her tact, wisdom, and patience, she gradually succeeded in converting her husband's household to a happy Buddhist home.

Daily, Visākhā would give alms to the *Sangha* at her own house. Both in the forenoon and afternoon, she would visit the monastery to minister to the needs of the *Sangha* and hear discourses from the *Buddha*. Suppiyā, another devout Buddhist lady, usually accompanied her during her visit.

Visākhā was so generous that she once approached the *Buddha* and asked for the following eight boons:

1. To give robes to the *Sangha* during the rainy season for as long as she lived;
2. To provide alms to the *Bhikkhus* coming to Sāvatthī;
3. To provide alms to those going out of Sāvatthī;
4. To give food to sick *Bhikkhus*;
5. To give food to those who attend on the sick;
6. To give medicine for the sick *Bhikkhus*;
7. To give rice-gruel for *Bhikkhus*;
8. To give bathing garments for nuns.

One day, Visākhā happened to visit the monastery wearing her best garment, which had been given to her by her father as a wedding present. But, inasmuch as she thought it was unseemly to appear before the *Buddha* so gaily dressed, she removed it, folded it into a bundle, gave it to her maidservant, and went to see the *Buddha* dressed in another garment given to her by her father-in-law. After the discourse, Visākhā left the monastery accompanied by the maidservant, who forgot to take the bundle that had been placed in her custody. Venerable Ānanda saw the bundle and, as instructed by the *Buddha*, put it in a safe place, later to be returned to its owner. On hearing that the bundle had inadvertently been left behind by the maidservant, Visākhā asked her to bring it back, provided that it had not been touched by Venerable Ānanda. When what had happened was reported to Visākhā, she went to the *Buddha* and expressed her desire to do something beneficial with the money realized by selling the garment. The *Buddha* advised her to erect a monastery at the East Gate for the use of the *Sangha*. However, inasmuch as no one had the means to buy the costly garment, Visākhā herself bought it back and erected a monastery at a great cost and named it Pubbārāma. As invited by Visākhā, the *Buddha* and His disciples spent the *vassāna* period[196] in this new, spacious monastery. Great was Visākhā's joy when the *Buddha* spent six rainy seasons there.

It is stated that Visākhā, instead of chastising the maidservant for her apparent negligence, expressed gratitude, because the maidservant had given her the opportunity to perform this good deed.

On various occasions, several discourses were delivered to Visākhā by the *Buddha*. In one discourse, the *Buddha* spoke on the observance of the Eight Precepts by

[196] *Vassāna* "the rainy season." In ancient times, as well as today, three regular seasons were recognized in India: (1) *vassāna* (the rainy reason); (2) *hemanta* (the winter season); and (3) *gimhāna* (the hot season). The *vassāna*, or rainy season, begins in the month of *Āsālha* and extends up to the month of *Assayuga*, that is, approximately from the middle of July to the middle of November.

laymen on *Uposatha* Days,[197] the observance of which prevails in almost all Buddhist countries in Asia up to this day.

Dealing with the qualities that make a woman seek birth in happy states, the *Buddha* said:[198]

"Active, careful to cherish him always,
She does not neglect the man who brings her every joy;
Nor will a good wife move her husband to anger by some spiteful words;
And she reveres all whom her lord honors,
For she is wise. Deft, nimble, early to rise,
She minds his wealth among friends and coworkers
And sweetly keeps all in order. A wife like this,
Who complies with her husband's wish and will,
Is born again where lovely devas dwell."

In another discourse, the *Buddha*, referring to the qualities in a woman that tend to well-being and happiness in this world and in the next, spoke as follows:[199]

"Herein, Visākhā, a woman is capable at her work, she manages the servants, in her ways, she is lovely to her husband, and she manages his wealth.

"Herein, Visākhā, a woman is accomplished in trustful confidence, virtue, charity, and wisdom."

Being a lady of many talents, Visākhā played an important role in various activities connected with the *sāsana*.[200] At times, she was authorized by the *Buddha* to settle disputes that arose among the *Bhikkhunīs*. Some *Vinaya* rules were also laid down for *Bhikkhus* owing to her intervention.

Due to her magnanimity, she was regarded as the chief benefactress of the *sāsana* and the greatest female supporter of the *Buddha*.

By her dignified conduct, graceful deportment, refined manners, courteous speech, obedience and reverence to elders, compassion to those who were less fortunate, kind hospitality, and religious zeal, she won the hearts of all those who knew her.

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[197] Usually, the 1st, 8th, 15th, and 23rd of the lunar month are regarded as the *Uposatha* or Holy Days, when lay followers observe the following Eight Precepts (*aṭṭhanga-samannāgata uposatha*): (1) to abstain from taking life; (2) to abstain from taking what is not freely given; (3) to abstain from all sexual activity; (4) to abstain from false speech; (5) to abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness; (6) to abstain from eating solid food after noon; (7) to abstain from dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows; from the use of garlands, perfumes, and unguents; and from things that tend to beautify and adorn; and (8) to abstain from using high and luxurious beds and seats. Though, as a rule, the Eight Precepts are traditionally observed on the *Uposatha* Days, there is no objection to observing them on any convenient day, the object being to control deeds, words, and the five senses.

[198] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part IV.

[199] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part IV.

[200] *Sāsana*, literally, "message," that is, the Buddhist religion, teachings, doctrines.

It is stated that she had the good fortune to be the happy mother of ten fortunate sons and ten fortunate daughters. She died at the ripe old age of one hundred twenty.

Jīvaka, the Fosterling

Jīvaka was the celebrated physician of the *Buddha*.

Immediately after his birth, Jīvaka was placed in a casket and was cast away by his mother, a courtesan, on a dust heap by the side of the road.

Prince Abhaya, a son of King Bimbisāra, happened to pass that way and saw the helpless infant surrounded by crows. Discovering that he was alive (*jīvati*), Prince Abhaya took him with him and placed him in the care of nurses.

Inasmuch as he was found alive, he was named Jīvaka. Since he was adopted by a Prince, he was called Komārabhacca.

Growing up, he became a skillful physician and surgeon. It is stated that he performed two successful operations on a millionaire who was suffering from a severe headache.

He used to attend on the *Buddha* three times a day.

When the *Buddha's* foot was wounded by a splinter caused by the hurling of a rock by Devadatta, it was Jīvaka who attended on Him and healed Him.

Realizing the manifold advantages of having a monastery close to his residence, Jīvaka erected one in his mango park. After the consecration ceremony of this monastery, he became a Stream-Winner (*Sotāpanna*).

The Jīvaka Sutta,[201] which deals with the question of eating flesh, was delivered by the *Buddha* to Jīvaka.

It was Jīvaka who induced King Ajātasattu to visit the *Buddha* after he had killed his father, King Bimbisāra.

At his request, the *Buddha* directed His disciples to undertake regular physical exercise. ■

Further Reading

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[201] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Gahapativagga, Jīvaka Sutta, no. 55.

10

The Buddha's Royal Patrons

"A treacherous bog it is, this patronage of bows and gifts and treats from the wealthy. It is like a fine dart embedded in the flesh, for erring humans hard to extricate."[202]

King Bimbisāra

King Bimbisāra, who ruled in Magadha, with its capital at Rājagaha, was the *Buddha's* first royal patron. Ascending the throne at the age of fifteen, he reigned for fifty-two years.

When Prince Siddhattha renounced the world and was seeking alms in the street of Rājagaha as a humble ascetic, the King saw Him from the palace and was highly impressed by His majestic appearance and dignified deportment. Immediately, he sent messengers to ascertain who He was. On learning that He was resting after His meal under the *pandavapabbata*, the King, accompanied by his retinue, went up to the royal ascetic and inquired about His birthplace and ancestry. The Ascetic Gotama replied:

"Just straight, O King, upon the Himalayas, there is, in the district of Kosala of ancient families, a country endowed with wealth and energy. I am sprung from that family, which, by clan, belongs to the Solar dynasty, by birth to the Sākyas. I crave not for pleasures of the senses. Realizing the evil of sensory pleasures and seeing renunciation as safe, I proceed to seek the Highest, for, in that, my mind rejoices."[203]

Thereupon, the King invited Him to visit his kingdom after His Enlightenment.

The Buddha Meets King Bimbisāra

In accordance with the promise that the *Buddha* made to King Bimbisāra before His Enlightenment, He, with His large troupe of *Arahant* disciples, went from Gayā to

[202] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, Pārāyaṇavagga, Mahākassapa Theragāthā (1053).
[203] *Sutta Nipāta*, Pabbajjā Sutta.

Rājagaha, the capital of the district of Magadha. Here, He stayed at the Suppatittha Shrine in a Palm Grove.

The happy news of the *Buddha's* arrival in the kingdom and His high reputation as an unparalleled religious teacher soon spread throughout the city. The King, hearing of His arrival, came with a large number of his subjects to welcome the *Buddha*. He approached the *Buddha*, respectfully saluted Him, and sat at one side. Thereupon, some of the King's subjects respectfully saluted the *Buddha*, some looked at Him with expressions of friendly greetings, some saluted Him with clasped hands, some introduced themselves, while others silently took their seats. Since both the *Buddha* and Venerable Kassapa were held in high esteem by the multitude, they were not certain whether the *Buddha* was leading the Holy Life under Venerable Kassapa or whether Venerable Kassapa was leading the Holy Life under the *Buddha*. The *Buddha* read their thoughts and questioned Venerable Kassapa as to why he had given up his fire-sacrifice. Understanding the motive of the *Buddha's* question, he explained that he had abandoned the fire-sacrifice because he preferred the passionless and peaceful state of *nibbāna* to worthless sensory pleasures. After this, he fell at the feet of the *Buddha* and, acknowledging His superiority, repeated: "My Teacher, Lord, is the Exalted One — I am the disciple. My Teacher, Lord, is the Exalted One — I am the disciple."

The devout people were delighted to hear of the conversion of Venerable Kassapa. Thereupon, the *Buddha* preached the *Mahā Nārada Kassapa Jātaka*[204] to show that, in a previous birth, when He was born as Nārada, He had converted Kassapa in a similar way.

Hearing the *Dhamma* expounded by the *Buddha*, the "Eye of Truth" arose in them all. King Bimbisāra attained *Sotāpanna*, and, seeking refuge in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*, invited the *Buddha* and His disciples to the palace for the meal on the following day. After the meal, the King wished to know where the *Buddha* would reside. The *Buddha* replied that a secluded place, neither too far nor too close to the city, accessible to those who desired to visit Him, pleasant, not crowded during the day, not too noisy at night, with as few sounds as possible, and fit for the privacy of men, would be suitable.

The King thought that his Bamboo Grove would meet all such requirements. Therefore, in return for the transcendental gift that the *Buddha* had bestowed upon him, he gave the park with its ideally secluded bamboo grove[205] for the use of the *Buddha* and the *Sangha*. This park had no buildings to shelter the *Sangha* but was filled with many shady trees and secluded spots. This was the first gift of a place of residence for the *Buddha* and His disciples. The *Buddha* spent three successive rainy seasons and three other rainy seasons in this quiet Bamboo Grove (*veḷuvanārāma*).[206]

After his conversion, the King led the life of an exemplary monarch, observing *Uposatha* regularly on four days of the month.

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[204] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, Pārāyaṇavagga, *Jātaka*, no. 544.

[205] Also known as the "Sanctuary of the Squirrels."

[206] In Pāḷi, *Ārāma* means a mere park. There were no buildings when the *Buddha* accepted this generous gift. At present, the term *Ārāma* is used in the sense of a monastery with buildings for monks.

Kosala Devī, daughter of King Mahā Kosala and sister of King Pasenadi of Kosala, was King Bimbisāra's loyal queen. Prince Ajātasattu was their son. Khemā, who, through the ingenuity of the King, became a follower of the *Buddha* and who later rose to the position of the first female disciple of the Order of Nuns, was another queen.

Though he was a pious monarch, yet, due to his past evil *kamma*, he had a very sad and pathetic end. Prince Ajātasattu, successor to the throne, instigated by wicked Devadatta Thera, attempted to kill his father and usurp the throne. The unfortunate prince was caught red-handed, but the compassionate father, instead of punishing him for his brutal act, rewarded him with the coveted crown.

The ungrateful son showed his gratitude to his father by casting him into prison in order to starve him to death. His mother alone had free access to the King daily. The loyal queen carried food concealed in her waist-pouch. The prince found out and ordered her to stop. She then carried food concealed in her hair-knot. Again, the prince found out. Thereupon, she bathed herself in scented water and smeared her body with a mixture of honey, butter, ghee, and molasses. The King licked her body and sustained himself. The over-vigilant prince detected this as well and ordered his mother not to visit his father.

King Bimbisāra was without any means of sustenance, but he paced back and forth enjoying spiritual happiness, since he was a *Sotāpanna*. Ultimately, his wicked son decided to put an end to the life of his noble father. Ruthlessly, he ordered King Bimbisāra's barber to cut open the soles of his feet, put salt and oil on the open cuts, and then roast the King's feet with burning charcoal.

The King, who saw the barber approaching, thought that his son, realizing his folly, was sending the barber to shave his beard and cut his hair in preparation for his release from prison. Contrary to his expectations, he met a sad end. The barber ruthlessly executed the barbarous orders of Ajātasattu. The good King died in great agony. On that very day, a son was born to Ajātasattu. Letters conveying the news of the birth of his son and the death of his father reached the palace at the same time.

The letter conveying the happy news was read first. The love that arose in Ajātasattu towards his first-born son was indescribable. He was thrilled with joy, and his paternal love penetrated to the core of his body.

Immediately, he rushed to his mother and questioned her: "Mother dear, did my father love me when I was a child?"

"What are you saying, son? When you were conceived in my womb, I developed a craving to sip some blood from the right hand of your father. This, I dare not say. Consequently, I grew pale and thin. I was finally persuaded to disclose my inhuman desire. Joyfully, your father fulfilled my wish, and I drank that abhorrent potion. The soothsayers predicted that you would be an enemy of your father. Accordingly, you were named Ajātasattu (Unborn Enemy). I attempted to induce a miscarriage, but your father prevented it. After you were born, again, I wanted to kill you. But, again, your father interfered. On one occasion, you were suffering from a boil on your finger, and nobody was able to lull you to sleep. But your father, who was administering justice in the royal court, took you into his lap and, caressing you, sucked the boil. Thereupon, it burst open

in his mouth. O, my dear son, that pus and blood! Yet, your affectionate father swallowed it out of love for you."

Instantly, Ajātasattu cried: "Run and release my beloved father quickly!" But his father had closed his eyes forever. The other letter was then placed in his hand, and Ajātasattu burst into tears. He realized what paternal love was only after he became a father himself.

After King Bimbisāra died, he was immediately reborn as a *deva* named Janavasabha in the Cātummahārājika Heaven.

Later, Ajātasattu was completely transformed and became one of the *Buddha's* distinguished lay followers. After the *Buddha's parinibbāna*, Ajātasattu took a leading part in the holding of the First Council.[207]

King Pasenadi of Kosala

King Pasenadi, son of Mahā Kosala, who reigned in the kingdom of Kosala, with its capital at Sāvatthī, was another royal patron of the *Buddha*. He was a contemporary of the *Buddha* and, owing to his proficiency in various arts, had the good fortune to be made King by his father while he was still alive.

His conversion must probably have taken place during the very early part of the *Buddha's* ministry. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, it is stated that he once approached the *Buddha* and, questioning Him about His perfect Enlightenment, referred to Him as being young in years and young in ordination.[208] The *Buddha* replied:

> *"There are four objects, O Mahārāja, that should not be disregarded or despised. They are a Khattiya,*[209] *a snake, fire, and a Bhikkhu."*[210]

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[207] The First Council was held at Rājagaha during the first rainy season retreat three months after the *parinibbāna* of the *Buddha*. Its goal was to preserve the purity of the *Dhamma*. Five hundred *Arahants* attended, led by Mahā Kassapa. First, Venerable Upāli was questioned on the *Vinaya*, and then Venerable Ānanda was questioned on the *Dhamma*. Their responses were collected and standardized into the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and *Sutta Piṭaka* respectively. A Second Council was held 100 years later, and a Third Council 236 years later.

The most recent Buddhist council, the Sixth Council, was held in Burma (Myanmar) from 17 May 1954 to 24 May 1956. The completion date of the Council coincided with the 2,500th anniversary of the *parinibbāna* of the *Buddha*. The Council was convened eighty-three years after the Fifth Council, which was held in Mandalay, Burma, in 1871. As in previous Buddhist councils, the major purpose of the Sixth Council was to preserve the *Buddha's* teachings and practices as understood in the Theravādin tradition. Over the two-year period during which the council took place, monks from different countries recited from their existing versions of the Pāḷi Canon and the associated post-canonical literature. As a result, the Council synthesized a new redaction of the Pāḷi texts, ultimately transcribed into several native scripts.

[208] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* 1:64.

[209] Sanskrit *Kṣatriya*. A member of the Warrior Caste.

[210] An enraged warrior prince, though young, may ruthlessly cause harm to others. The bite of even a small snake may prove fatal. A little spark may produce a huge fire. Even a young *Bhikkhu* may be a Saint or a *Dhamma* scholar.

The *Buddha* then delivered an interesting discourse on the subject to the King. At the close of the discourse, the King expressed his great pleasure and instantly became a follower of the *Buddha*. From that moment until his death, he was deeply devoted to the *Buddha*. It is said that, on one occasion, the King prostrated himself before the *Buddha* and stroked His feet, covering them with kisses.[211]

His chief queen, Mallikā, a very devout and wise lady, well versed in the *Dhamma*, was greatly responsible for his religious enthusiasm. Like a true friend, she had to act as his religious guide on several occasions.

One day, the King dreamt sixteen unusual dreams and was greatly perturbed in mind, not knowing their true significance. His Brahmin advisers interpreted them to be dreams portending evil and instructed him to make an elaborate animal sacrifice to ward off the dangers that would result therefrom. As advised, he made all the necessary arrangements for the inhuman sacrifice, which would have resulted in the slaying of thousands of helpless creatures. Queen Mallikā, hearing that this barbarous act was about to be perpetrated, persuaded the King to have his dreams interpreted by the *Buddha*, whose understanding infinitely surpassed that of those worldly Brahmins. The King approached the *Buddha* and mentioned the purpose of his visit. Relating the sixteen dreams, he wished to know their significance. Thereupon, the *Buddha* fully explained their significance to him. Satisfied, the King abandoned the plans for the animal sacrifice.

Unlike King Bimbisāra, King Pasenadi had the good fortune to hear several edifying and instructive discourses from the *Buddha*. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, there is a special section called the Kosala Saṁyutta,[212] in which most of the discourses given to the King by the *Buddha* are recorded.

Once, while the King was seated in the company of the *Buddha*, he saw some ascetics with hairy bodies and long nails passing by and, rising from his seat, respectfully saluted them, calling out his name to them: "I am the King, your reverences, the Kosala, Pasenadi." When they had gone, he came back to the *Buddha* and wished to know whether they were *Arahants* or those who were striving for Arahantship. The *Buddha* explained that it was difficult for ordinary laymen enjoying material pleasures to judge whether others are *Arahants* or not and made the following interesting observations:

> *"It is by association that one's conduct is to be understood, and that, too, after a long time and not in a short time, by one who is watchful and not by a heedless person, by an intelligent person and not by an unintelligent one. It is by talking with him that one's purity is to be understood. It is in time of trouble that one's fortitude is to be understood. It is by discussion that one's wisdom is to be understood, and that, too, after a long time and not in a short time, by one who is watchful and not by a heedless person, by an intelligent person and not by an unintelligent one."*

[211] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Rājavagga, Dhammacetiya Sutta, no. 89.
[212] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Sagāthavagga, Kosala Saṁyutta, no. 3.

King Pasenadi, as ruler of a great kingdom, could not possibly have avoided warfare, especially with kings of neighboring countries. Once, he was compelled to fight against his own nephew, King Ajātasattu of Magadha, and was defeated. Hearing about it, the *Buddha* remarked:

> *"Conquest breeds hatred, for the conquered live in sorrow. Those who are peaceful live happily, having renounced both conquest and defeat."*[213]

On another occasion, King Pasenadi was victorious, and he confiscated the whole army of King Ajātasattu, sparing only him. When the *Buddha* heard about the new victory, He uttered the following verse, the truth of which applies with equal force to this modern war-weary world as well:

> *"A man may spoil another just so far as it may serve his ends, but, when he is spoiled by others, he, despoiled, spoils yet again. So long as the fruit of evil has not matured, the fool fancies 'now is the hour, [now is] the chance!' But, when the deed bears fruit, evil befalls him. The slayer gets a slayer in his turn. The conqueror gets one who conquers him. The abuser gains abuse. The annoyer is himself annoyed. Thus, by the evolution of the deed, a man who spoils is spoiled in his turn."*

What the *Buddha* said to King Pasenadi about women is equally interesting and encouraging to women. Once, while the King was engaged in a pious conversation with the *Buddha*, a messenger came and whispered into his ear that Queen Mallikā had given birth to a daughter. The King was not pleased at this unwelcome news. In ancient India, as it is to a great extent today, a daughter is not considered a happy addition to a family for several selfish reasons such as, for instance, the problem of providing a dowry. The *Buddha*, unlike any other religious teacher, paid a glowing tribute to women and mentioned four chief characteristics that adorn a woman in the following words:

> *"Some women are, indeed, better [than men]. Bring her up, O Lord of men.*
>
> *"There are women who are wise and virtuous, who regard their mother-in-law as a goddess, and who are chaste.*
>
> *"A valiant son, a lord of realms, who would rule a kingdom, may be born to such a noble wife."*

"Some women are indeed better [than men]" — *itthi hi pi ekacciyā seyyā* were the actual words used by the *Buddha*. No religious teacher has made such a bold and noble pronouncement, especially in India, where women were not held in high esteem.

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[213] *Dhammapada*, XV, Happiness, verse 201.

Deeply grieved over the death of his old grandmother at the age of one hundred twenty, King Pasenadi approached the *Buddha* and said that he would have given everything within his means to save his grandmother, who had been a mother to him. The *Buddha* consoled him, saying:

> *"All beings are mortal — they end with death, they have death as their prospect. All the vessels wrought by the potter, whether they are baked or unbaked, are breakable — they finish broken, they have breakage as their prospect."*

The King so greatly desired to hear the *Dhamma* that, even if affairs of state demanded his presence in other parts of the kingdom, he would avail himself of every possible opportunity to visit the *Buddha* and engage in pious conversation. The Dhammacetiya[214] and Kaṇṇakatthala[215] Suttas were delivered on such occasions.

King Pasenadi's chief consort, the daughter of a garland-maker, predeceased him. One of his wives was a sister of King Bimbisāra. One of his sisters was married to King Bimbisāra, and Ajātasattu was her son.

King Pasenadi had a son named Viḍūḍabha, who revolted against him in his old age. The son's mother was the daughter of Mahānāma the Sākya, who was related to the *Buddha*, and his grandmother was a slave-girl. The King did not know this fact when he took her as one of his consorts. Hearing a derogatory remark made by Sākyans about his ignoble ancestry, Viḍūḍabha took vengeance by attempting to destroy the Sākya people. Unfortunately, it was due to Viḍūḍabha that the King had to die a pathetic death in a hall outside the city, with only a servant as his companion. King Pasenadi predeceased the *Buddha*. ■

[214] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Rājavagga, Dhammacetiya Sutta, no. 89.
[215] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Rājavagga, Kaṇṇakatthala Sutta, no. 90.

11

The Buddha's Ministry

"Avoid all evil, cultivate the good, purify your mind: this sums up the teaching of the Buddhas."[216]

Introduction

The *Buddha's* beneficent and successful ministry lasted forty-five years. From His 35th year, the year of His Enlightenment, until His death in His 80th year, He served humanity both by example and precept. Throughout the year, He wandered from place to place, at times alone, sometimes accompanied by His disciples, expounding the *Dhamma* to the people and liberating them from the bonds of *saṁsāra*. During the rainy season (*vassāna*), which lasted from July to November, owing to incessant rains, He lived in retreat, as was customary with all ascetics in India at the time.

In olden times, as today, three regular seasons prevailed in India, namely, *vassāna* (the rainy or monsoon season), *hemanta* (the cold season, winter), and *gimhāna* (the hot season). The rainy season (*vassāna*) starts in the month of *Āsālha* and extends up to the month of *Assayuga*, that is, approximately from the middle of July to the middle of November.

During the rainy season, due to torrential rains, rivers and streams usually get flooded, roads get inundated, communications get interrupted, and people, as a rule, are confined to their homes and villages and live on whatever provisions they have collected during the previous seasons. During this period, the ascetics find it difficult to wander from place to place engaging in their preaching tours. An infinite variety of vegetable and animal life also appears to such an extent that people could not move about without unconsciously destroying them. Accordingly, all ascetics, including the *Buddha* and His disciples, would suspend their itinerant activities and live in retreat in solitary places. Usually, the *Buddha* and His disciples were invited to spend the rainy seasons either in a monastery or in a secluded park. Sometimes, however, they spent their retreats in forests. During these retreats, whether in a monastery, secluded park, or forest, people flocked to the *Buddha* to listen to the *Dhamma* and thus put the opportunity of His presence in their vicinity to their best advantage.

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[216] *Dhammapada*, XIV, The Buddha, verse 183.

The First Twenty Years

1st Year at Benares (Vārāṇasi; Kāsi)

After expounding the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta to His first five disciples (Koṇḍañña, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahānāma, and Assaji) on the *Āsālha* full moon day, the *Buddha* spent the first rainy season in the Deer Park at Isipatana, near Benares. Here, there was no special building in which He could reside. The conversion of Yasa and his friends took place during this retreat.

2nd, 3rd, and 4th Years at Rājagaha

Rājagaha was the capital of the Kingdom of Magadha, where King Bimbisāra ruled. When the *Buddha* visited the King, in accordance with the promise made by Him before His Enlightenment, the King offered his Bamboo Grove (*veḷuvana*) to the *Buddha* and His disciples. This was an ideal solitary place for monks, inasmuch as it was neither too far from nor too near to the city. The *Buddha* spent three rainy seasons in this quiet grove.

5th Year at Vesālī

During this year, while He was residing in the Pinnacled Hall at Mahāvana, near Vesālī, the *Buddha* heard of the impending death of His father, King Suddhodana, and, hastening to the King's chamber, preached the *Dhamma* to him. The King immediately attained Arahantship. Thereafter, the King experienced the bliss of emancipation and then passed away.

It was in this year that the Order of *Bhikkhunīs* was established at the request of Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī. After the cremation of King Suddhodana, when the *Buddha* was residing in the Nigrodha Park at Kapilavatthu, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī approached Him and begged permission for women to enter the Order. But the *Buddha* refused and returned to the Pinnacled Hall at Rājagaha. Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī was so intent on renouncing the world that she, accompanied by many Sākyan and Koliyan ladies, walked all the way from Kapilavatthu to Rājagaha and, through the intervention of Venerable Ānanda, succeeded in entering the Order.

6th Year at Mankula Hill in Kosambī near Allahabad

Just as He had performed the "Twin Wonder" (*yamaka pāṭihāriya*) to overcome the pride of His relatives at Kapilavatthu, even so did the *Buddha* perform it for a second time at Mankula Hill in Kosambī[217] to convert His alien followers.

[217] Kosambī was the capital of the small Kingdom of Vaṁsa, which was located between the Ganges and Jumna Rivers. It was ruled by King Udena.

7th Year at Tāvatiṁsa Heaven

A few days after the birth of Prince Siddhattha, Queen Mahā Māyā died and was born as a *deva*[218] in the Tusita Heaven. In the seventh year of His ministry, during the rainy season retreat, the *Buddha* is said to have preached the *Abhidhamma*[219] to the *devas* of the Tāvatiṁsa Heaven, where the *deva* who had been His mother went to hear Him. Daily, He came back to earth and gave a summary of His sermon to Venerable Sāriputta, who, in turn, expounded the doctrine to His disciples. What is embodied in the present *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is supposed to be this exposition by Sāriputta.

It is stated that, on hearing these discourses, the *deva* who had been His mother attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*).

8th Year

The *Buddha* spent the 8th year of His ministry at Bhesakalā Forest, near Suṁsumāra Rock, in the Bhagga District.

9th Year at Kosambī

It was in this year that Māgandiyā harbored a grudge against the *Buddha* and sought an opportunity to discredit Him.

Māgandiyā was a beautiful young woman. Her parents would not give her in marriage, since the prospective suitors were not, in their opinion, worthy of their daughter. One day, as the *Buddha* was surveying the world, He perceived the high degree of spiritual development of the parents. Out of compassion for them, He visited the place where Māgandiyā's father was tending the sacred fire. The Brahmin, fascinated by His physical beauty, thought that the *Buddha* was the best person to whom he could give his daughter in marriage and, requesting Him to stay there until his return, hurried home to fetch his daughter. In the meantime, the *Buddha* stamped His footprint on that spot and moved to a different place. The Brahmin and his wife, accompanied by their daughter, who was dressed in her best garments, came to that spot and observed the

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[218] *Deva*, literally, "radiant one," may be translated as "god," "deity," or "celestial being." *Devas* are beings who live in happy realms and who, as a rule, are invisible to the human eye. They are subject, however, just like all human and other beings, to ever-repeated rebirth, old age, and death, and are thus not freed from the cycle of existence (*saṁsāra*) and from misery. There are many classes of celestial beings. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 54.

[219] The *Abhidhamma*, or "Higher Doctrine," is the third major division of the Pāḷi Canon. It consists of seven books, which are systematic expositions of the doctrine from a strict philosophical point of view. They deal especially with the psychological analysis of phenomenal existence. Cf. Russell Webb, *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon*, pp. 39—42 (2nd edition. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1991]); Nyanaponika Thera, *Abhidhamma Studies* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [fourth edition 1998]); Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *Abhidhammattha Sangaha: Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Pāḷi Text, Translation, and Explanatory Guide* (Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions [2000]).

footprint. The wife, who was knowledgeable about signs, said that it was not the footprint of an ordinary man but of a pure person who had eradicated all passions. The Brahmin ridiculed the idea and, noticing the *Buddha* at a distance, offered his daughter to Him. Thereupon, the *Buddha*, describing how He had overcome His passions, said:

> *"Having seen Taṇhā, Aratī, and Rāgā,*[220] *I had no desire for the pleasures of love. What is this body, filled with urine and dung? I would not be willing to touch it, even with my foot."*

Hearing His *Dhamma*, the Brahmin and his wife attained *Anāgāmī*, the third stage of Sainthood. But proud Māgandiyā felt insulted and thought to herself:

> *"If this man has no need of me, it is perfectly proper for him to say so, but he declares me to be full of urine and dung. Very well, by virtue of birth, lineage, social position, wealth, and the charm of youth that I possess, I shall obtain a husband who is my equal, and then I shall know what ought to be done to the Monk Gotama."*

Enraged by the words of the *Buddha*, Māgandiyā became filled with hatred. Later, she was given as a consort to King Udena of Vaṁsa.[221] Taking advantage of her position as one of the royal consorts, she bribed people and instigated them to revile the *Buddha* and drive Him out of the city. When the *Buddha* entered the city, they shouted insults at Him, saying: "You are a thief, a simpleton, a fool, a camel, an ox, an ass, a denizen of hell, a beast. You have no hope of salvation. A state of punishment is all that you can look forward to."

Venerable Ānanda, unable to bear this filthy abuse, approached the *Buddha* and said:

> *"Lord, these citizens are reviling and abusing us. Let us go elsewhere."*
> *"Where shall we go, Ānanda?," asked the Buddha.*
> *"To some other city, Lord," said Ānanda.*
> *"If men revile us there, where shall we go then?," inquired the Buddha.*
> *"To still another city Lord," said Ānanda.*
> *"Ānanda, one should not speak this way. Where a difficulty arises, it should be settled right there. Only under those circumstances is it permissible to go elsewhere.*[222] *But who are reviling you, Ānanda?," questioned the Buddha.*
> *"Lord, everyone is reviling us, even the slaves," replied Ānanda*.

[220] The three daughters of Māra.
[221] The King was living at Kosambī at the time. He had two chief consorts: Māgandiyā and Vāsuladattā. Righteous Sāmāvatī, the adopted daughter of his finance minister, Ghosaka, was his queen.
[222] That is to say, only after the difficulty has been resolved.

Admonishing Ānanda to practice patience, the *Buddha* said:

> *"Patiently, I shall bear harsh words directed at me, as an elephant bears arrows shot from a bow on the battlefield. Alas, most people are undisciplined.*[223]
>
> *"Only the trained [horses and elephants] are taken to gatherings of people; the king mounts only the trained [horse or elephant]. Best among men are those who have trained the mind to endure harsh words patiently.*
>
> *"Mules, thoroughbred horses, horses from Sindh, and great elephants are good animals when they are trained. But even better are those with well-trained minds."*[224]

Again, He addressed Venerable Ānanda and said:

> *"Do not be disturbed. These men will revile you only for seven days, and, on the eighth day, they will become silent. A difficulty encountered by the Buddhas lasts no longer than seven days."*

As predicted, the abuse stopped.

10th Year at Pārileyyaka Forest

While the *Buddha* was residing at Kosambī, a dispute arose among two *Bhikkhus* — one versed in the *Dhamma* and the other in the *Vinaya* — with respect to the transgression of a minor rule of etiquette in the lavatory. Their respective supporters were also divided into two camps. Even the *Buddha* could not settle the differences between these quarrelsome monks. They were adamant and would not listen to His advice. The *Buddha* thought: "Under the present conditions, the quarrelsome *Bhikkhus* among whom I live make my life one of discomfort. It would be better to retire from the company of men and live a life of solitude." In pursuance of this thought, without even informing the *Sangha*, alone, He retired to the Pārileyyaka Forest and spent the rainy season at the foot of a beautiful *sāla* tree.

According to the story, it was on this occasion that an elephant and a monkey attended to His needs.[225]

11th Year at Ekanālā, Brahmin Village

The following Kasībhāradvajā Sutta[226] was delivered here:

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[223] The majority of people, being undisciplined in morality, speak without thinking about what they are saying and thus create conflict.
[224] *Dhammapada*, XXIII, The Elephant, verses 320—322.
[225] *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, Kosambaka Vatthu.
[226] *Sutta Nipāta,* Uragavagga, Kasībhāradvajā Sutta (The Farmer Bhāradvajā), no. 4

On one occasion, the Buddha was residing at Ekanālā in Dakkhiṇāgiri, the Brahmin village in Magadha. At that time, about five hundred plows belonging to the Brahmin Kasībhāradvajā[227] *were harnessed for plowing. Thereupon, the Exalted One, in the forenoon, dressed Himself and, taking bowl and robe, went to where the Brahmin was working. It was meal time, and the food was being distributed by the Brahmin. The Buddha went to the place where food was being distributed and stood at one side. The Brahmin Kasībhāradvajā saw the Buddha waiting for alms. Seeing Him, he spoke thus: "I, O Ascetic, plow and sow, and, having plowed and sown, I eat. You also, O Ascetic, should plow and sow, and, having plowed and sown, you should eat."*

"I, too, O Brahmin, plow and sow, and, having plowed and sown, I eat."

"But we do not see Venerable Gotama's yoke, or plow, or plowshare, or goad, or oxen, and yet you say: 'I too plow and sow, and, having plowed and sown, I eat'."

Then, the Brahmin Kasībhāradvajā addressed the Exalted One thus:

"A farmer you claim to be, but we see none of your tillage. Being questioned about plowing, please answer us so that we may know your plowing."

The *Buddha* answered:

"I am controlled in body, controlled in speech, temperate in food. With truthfulness, I cut away weeds. Absorption in the Highest[228] *is the release of the oxen.*

"Perseverance (viriya) is the beast of burden that carries me towards the bond-free state.[229] *Without turning, it goes, and, having gone, it does not grieve.*

"Thus is the tilling done — it bears the fruit of Deathlessness. Having done all tilling, one is free from sorrow."

Thereupon, the Brahmin Kasībhāradvajā, filling a large bowl with milk-rice, offered it to the Exalted One, saying:

"May the Venerable Gotama eat the milk-rice! The Venerable Gotama is a farmer, since the Venerable Gotama tills a crop that bears the fruit of Deathlessness."

The Exalted One, however, refused to accept the milk-rice, saying:

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[227] *Kasī* = "one who tills or plows, plowman," from Pāḷi *kas*- (Sanskrit *kṛṣ*- or *karṣ*-) "to plow or till the land." Thus, Kasībhāradvajā = "the plowman Bhāradvajā."

[228] That is, Arahantship.

[229] That is, *nibbāna*.

"What is obtained by reciting verses is not fit to be eaten by me. This, O Brahmin, is not the rule of sears. The Enlightened Ones reject such food. While this principle lasts, this is the livelihood.

"Serve the unique, cankerless, great sage of holy calm with other kind of food and drink, for He is like a field to him who desires to sow good deeds."

Thereupon, Kasībhāradvajā asked the *Buddha* to whom he should give the milk-rice. The *Buddha* replied that He did not see anyone in this world who could rightly digest this milk-rice, and He advised Kasībhāradvajā to throw it away. Kasībhāradvajā then dropped the milk-rice into water where there was no life. As soon as it was dropped into the water, it hissed, and boiled, and fumed, and steamed. Kasībhāradvajā was awestruck, and his hair stood on end as he watched what was happening. He immediately prostrated himself before the *Buddha* and said:

"This is magnificent, Master Gotama! Just as if one might set upright what had been overturned, or reveal what had been hidden, or point out the way to one who had gone astray, or hold out a lamp in the dark so that those who have eyes might see, so, likewise, has the Truth been explained by Master Gotama in various ways. Therefore, I take refuge in Him, His Dhamma, and His Sangha. I wish to enter the homeless life and to receive the higher ordination from Master Gotama."

Then, Kasībhāradvajā received ordination, and, not long after, by leading a secluded life and striving diligently and energetically with a resolute will, Venerable Bhāradvajā became one of the *Arahants*.

12th Year at Verañjā

A Brahmin from Verañjā, hearing that the *Buddha* was residing at Verañjā near Naḷeru's Nimbu tree with a large company of His disciples, approached Him and raised several questions regarding His conduct, thus:

"Master Gotama, I have heard that the Ascetic Gotama pays no homage to Brahmins who are old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life and come to the last stage, that he does not rise up for them or invite them to sit down, and I find that this is actually so, too, for Master Gotama does not in fact do these things. That is not good, Master Gotama."

"Brahmin, in this world, with its deities, its māras, and its divinities, in this generation, with its monks and Brahmins, with its princes and men, I see none to whom I should pay homage or rise up for or invite to sit down, for his head would burst open when a Perfect One paid homage to or rose up for or invited him to sit down."

"Master Gotama is lacking in taste."

"There is one way in which it could rightly be said that the Ascetic Gotama is lacking in taste — taste for visible forms, taste for sounds, odors, flavors, and objects of touch — these are rejected in a Perfect One ... and are no longer subject to future arising. But surely, Brahmin, you did not mean that?"

"Master Gotama has no sense of values."

"There is a way in which it could rightly be said that the Ascetic Gotama has no sense of values — sense of value for visible forms, sense of value for sounds, odors, flavors, and objects of touch — these are rejected in a Perfect One ... and are no longer subject to future arising. But surely, Brahmin, you did not mean that?"

"Master Gotama teaches that there is nothing that ought to be done."

"There is a way in which it could rightly be said that the Ascetic Gotama teaches that there is nothing that ought to be done — for I do teach that one ought not to do wrong bodily or verbal or mental acts and the many kinds of evil, unwholesome things. But surely, Brahmin, you did not mean that?"

"Master Gotama teaches nihilism."

"There is a way in which it could rightly be said that the Ascetic Gotama teaches nihilism — for I do teach annihilation of lust and hatred and delusion and the many kinds of evil, unwholesome things. But surely, Brahmin, you did not mean that?"

"Master Gotama is fastidious."

"There is a way in which it could rightly be said that the Ascetic Gotama is fastidious — for I am fastidious about wrong bodily, verbal, and mental acts and the many kinds of evil, unwholesome things. But surely, Brahmin, you did not mean that?"

"The Ascetic Gotama is one who leads away."

"There is a way in which it could rightly be said that the Ascetic Gotama is one who leads away — for I teach the Dhamma that leads away from lust and hatred and delusion and from the many kinds of evil, unwholesome things. But surely, Brahmin, you did not mean that?"

"The Ascetic Gotama is a slayer."

"There is a way in which it could rightly be said that the Ascetic Gotama is a slayer — for I say that wrong bodily, verbal, and mental acts are evil, unwholesome things that ought to be slain; and him I call a slayer in whom evil, unwholesome things that ought to be slain are slain, cut off at the root, made like palm stumps, done away with, and no more subject to future arising; and, in a Perfect One, these things are slain ... and no more subject to future arising. But surely, Brahmin, you did not mean that?"

"The Ascetic Gotama has missed his rebirth."

"There is a way in which it could rightly be said that the Ascetic Gotama has missed his rebirth — when a person's re-entry into a womb and his future coming to birth are rejected ... and no longer subject to future arising, then, I say of him that he has missed his rebirth; and, in the Perfect One, re-entry into a

womb and future rebirth are rejected ... and no longer subject to future arising. But surely, Brahmin, you did not mean that?"

"Now suppose, Brahmin, that a hen had eight or ten or twelve eggs which she brooded over, incubated, and hatched with care; should the first one of these chicks to pierce the shell with the points of its claws and beak, the first one to come out safely, be called the eldest or the youngest?"

"It should be called the eldest, Master Gotama, for it is the eldest of them."

"So, too, Brahmin, in this generation given over to Ignorance, enclosed in a shell of Ignorance, sealed in by Ignorance, I alone in the world have discovered the supreme full Enlightenment by piercing the shell of Ignorance, of Unawareness. Thus, it is I who am the eldest and the foremost in the world."[230]

The Brahmin was so pleased with the *Buddha's* answers that he became a follower and invited the *Buddha* and His disciples to spend the rainy season at Verañjā. The *Buddha* signified His assent, as usual, by His silence.

Unfortunately, at this particular time, there was a famine in Verañjā, and the *Buddha* and His disciples were compelled to live on food intended for horses. A horse-dealer very kindly provided them with some coarse food that was available, and the *Buddha* partook of such food with perfect equanimity.

One day during this period, Venerable Sāriputta, arising from his solitary meditation, approached the *Buddha* and respectfully questioned him thus: "Which *Buddha's* Dispensation lasted long and which did not?"

The *Buddha* replied that the Dispensation of the Buddhas Vippasi, Sikhī, and Vessabhū did not endure long, while the Dispensation of the Buddhas Kakusandha, Konāgamana, and Kassapa endured long.[231]

The *Buddha* attributed this to the fact that some *Buddhas* did not make a great effort to preach the *Dhamma* in detail and did not promulgate disciplinary rules and regulations for their disciples, while other *Buddhas* did so.

Thereupon, Venerable Sāriputta respectfully implored the *Buddha* to promulgate the Fundamental Precepts (*Pātimokkha*[232]) for the future discipline of the *Sangha* so that the Holy life might endure long. To which the *Buddha* replied:

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[230] *Vinaya Piṭaka*, Sutta Vibhanga, Pārājikā, The Foremost in the World. The rainy season at Verañjā forms the subject of the Introduction to the Pārājika. The Sutta Vibhanga enumerates the 227 disciplinary rules for monks. These rules are arranged into eight categories: (1) four rules leading to expulsion from the Order if broken: sexual intercourse, theft, taking a human life or inducing another to commit suicide, and falsely boasting of supernormal powers; (2) thirteen rules dealing with initial and subsequent meetings of the *Sangha*; (3) two indefinite rules; (4) thirty rules dealing with expiation and forfeiture; (5) ninety-two rules dealing with expiation; (6) four rules requiring confession; (7) seventy-five rules dealing with etiquette and decorum; and (8) seven rules for the settlement of legal processes.

[231] *Vinaya Piṭaka*, Sutta Vibhanga, Pārājikā.

[232] Sanskrit *Prātimokṣa*.

"Be patient, Sāriputta, be patient. The Tathāgata alone is aware of the time for it. Until certain conditions arise in the Sangha, the Tathāgata will not promulgate Disciplinary Rules for the disciples and will not lay down the Fundamental Precepts. When such defiling conditions arise in the Sangha, then only will the Tathāgata promulgate Disciplinary Rules and lay down the Fundamental Precepts in order to eradicate such defilements.

"When, Sāriputta, the Sangha attains long standing, full development, great increase in gains, and greatness in erudition, defiling conditions will arise in the Sangha. Then will the Tathāgata promulgate Disciplinary Rules and lay down the Fundamental Precepts to prevent such defilements.

"Sāriputta, the Order of disciples is free from troubles, devoid of evil tendencies, free from stain, pure, and well established in virtue. The last of my five hundred disciples is a Sotāpanna,[233] *not likely to fall, steadfast and destined for Enlightenment."*

At the end of this rainy season, the *Buddha* went on a preaching tour to Soreyya, Saṁkassa, Kannakujja, Payāga, and, then, crossing the river, stayed some time in Benares and returned from there to Vesālī to reside at the Pinnacled Hall in Mahāvana.

13th and 14th Years

The 13th year was spent at Cāliya Rock, and the 14th year was spent at Jetavana Monastery in Sāvatthī. It was during the 14th year that Venerable Rāhula received his Higher Ordination, having completed his twentieth year.

15th Year at Kapilavatthu

The pathetic death of King Suppabuddha, who was angry with the *Buddha* for leaving his daughter, Yasodharā, occurred in this year.

It may be mentioned that the *Buddha* spent only one rainy season in His birthplace.

16th Year at the City of Āḷavī

The conversion of Āḷavaka the demon (*yakkha*), who feasted on human flesh, took place in this year.[234]

Āḷavaka, a ferocious demon, was enraged to see the *Buddha* in his mansion. He came up to Him and asked Him to depart. "Very well, friend," said the *Buddha* and went out. "Come in," said Āḷavaka, and the *Buddha* came in. For the second and third time,

[233] The *Buddha* was referring to Venerable Ānanda.
[234] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Sutta Nipāta*, Uragavagga, Āḷavaka Sutta.

he made the same request, and the *Buddha* complied. But, when he commanded Him for the fourth time, the *Buddha* refused and asked Āḷavaka to do what he could.

> *"Well, I will ask you a question," said Āḷavaka.*
>
> *"If you will not answer, I will scatter your thoughts, or tear out your heart, or take you by your feet and throw you across the Ganges."*
>
> *"Nay, friend," replied the Buddha.*
>
> *"I do not see in this world, inclusive of gods, brahmās, ascetics, and Brahmins, among the multitude of gods and men, any who could scatter my thoughts, or tear out my heart, or take me by my feet and throw me across the Ganges. However, friend, ask what you wish."*

Āḷavaka then asked the following questions:

> *"Herein, which is man's best possession?*
> *Which, when well practiced, yields happiness?*
> *Which, indeed, is the sweetest of tastes?*
> *How lived do they call the best life?"*

The *Buddha* answered these questions thus:

> *"Herein, confidence is man's best possession.*
> *Dhamma well practiced yields happiness.*
> *Truth, indeed, is the sweetest of tastes.*
> *Life lived with understanding is the best, they say."*

Āḷavaka next asked the *Buddha*:

> *"How does one cross the flood?*
> *How does one cross the sea?*
> *How does one overcome sorrow?*
> *How is one purified?"*

The Exalted One replied:

> *"By confidence, one crosses the flood.*
> *By heedfulness, one crosses the sea.*
> *By effort, one overcomes sorrow.*
> *By wisdom, one is purified."*

Āḷavaka then inquired:

> *"How is wisdom gained?*

How are riches found?
How is renown gained?
How are friends bound?
Passing from this world to the next, how does one not grieve?"

In answer, the *Buddha* said:

"The heedful, intelligent person of confidence gains wisdom by hearing the Dhamma of the Pure Ones that leads to nibbāna.

"He who does what is proper, persevering and strenuous, gains wealth.

"By truth, one attains fame.

"Generosity binds friends.

"That faithful householder who possesses these four virtues — truthfulness, good morals, courage, and liberality — does not grieve after passing away."

"Go ahead and ask any other ascetic or Brahmin whether there is found anything greater than truthfulness, self-control, generosity, and patience."

Understanding well the meaning of the *Buddha's* words, Āḷavaka said:

"How could I now ask other ascetics and Brahmins? Today, I know what is the secret of my future welfare.

"For my own good did the Buddha come to Āḷavī. Today, I know where gifts bestowed yield fruit in abundance. From village to village, from town to town, I will wander honoring the Fully Enlightened One and the perfection of the sublime Dhamma."

17th, 18th, 19th, and 20th Years

The 17th year was spent at Rājagaha. The 18th year was spent at Cāliya Rock. The 19th and 20th years were spent at Rājagaha.

The Buddha and Angulimāla[235]

It was in the 20th year of His ministry that the *Buddha* converted the notorious murderer Angulimāla. Ahiṁsaka[236] was his original name. His father was chaplain to the King of Kosala. He received his education at Taxila, the famous education center in olden days, and became the most illustrious and favorite pupil of his renowned teacher. Unfortunately, his colleagues grew jealous of him and, by concocting a false story,

[235] See *Majjhima Nikāya*, Rājavagga, Angulimāla Sutta, no. 86.
[236] Ahiṁsaka "not harming others, harmless, humane."

succeeded in poisoning the teacher's mind against him. The enraged teacher, without any investigation, contrived to put an end to Angulimāla's life by ordering him to fetch a thousand human right-hand fingers as a teacher's honorarium. In obedience to his teacher, though with great reluctance, he made his way to the Jalini forest in Kosala and started killing people to collect fingers for the required offering. At first, the fingers he collected were hung on a tree, but they were destroyed by crows and vultures. Thereafter, he wore a garland of the fingers to keep track of the exact number. Hence, he was known by the name Angulimāla.[237] After he had collected 999 fingers, the *Buddha* appeared on the scene. Overjoyed at the sight of the *Buddha*, because he thought he could complete the required number by killing the great ascetic, he drew his sword and stalked the *Buddha*. However, the *Buddha* used His psychic powers to create obstacles on the way so that Angulimāla would not be able to get near Him even though the *Buddha* walked at His usual pace. Angulimāla ran as fast as he could, but he could not overtake the *Buddha*. Panting and sweating, he stopped and cried out: "Stop, ascetic!" To which the *Buddha* calmly replied: "Though I walk, yet have I stopped. You too, Angulimāla, stop." The murderer thought to himself: "These ascetics speak the truth, yet He says that He has stopped, whereas it is I who have stopped. What does He mean?" Standing still, he questioned the *Buddha*:

> *"You who are walking, O Ascetic, has said: 'I have stopped!' And you tell me, who has stopped, to stop. I ask you, O Ascetic, what is the meaning of your words? How can you say that you have stopped, but I have not?"*

The *Buddha* gently replied:

> *"Indeed, I have stopped, Angulimāla, forever more, having renounced violence towards all living things. Therefore, it is I who have stopped, but you continue on."*

At that point, Angulimāla's good *kamma* rushed up to the surface. He realized that this ascetic was none other than the Buddha Gotama, who, out of compassion, had come to help him. He immediately threw down his sword and armor and became a convert. Later, as requested by him, he was admitted into the Noble Order by the *Buddha* with the mere utterance "Come *Bhikkhu*!" (*Ehi Bhikkhu*).

News spread that Angulimāla had become a *Bhikkhu*. The King of Kosala, in particular, was greatly relieved to hear of his conversion, because he was a veritable source of danger to his subjects.

But Venerable Angulimāla had no peace of mind, because, even in his solitary meditation, he had memories of his past deeds and of the pathetic cries of his unfortunate

[237] Angulimāla "finger necklace," so-called because of the necklace of the fingers of his victims that he wore around his neck. For a detailed account of Angulimāla's life story, cf. Nyanaponika Thera and Hellmuth Hecker, *Great Disciples of the Buddha: Their Lives, Their Works, Their Legacy* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1997]), pp. 317—333.

victims. As a result of his evil *kamma*, while seeking alms in the streets, he would become a target for stray sticks and stones, and he would return to the monastery "with broken head and flowing blood, cut and crushed" to be reminded by the *Buddha* that he was merely reaping the effects of his own *kamma*.

One day, as he went on his round for alms, he saw a woman in labor. Moved by compassion, he reported the woman's suffering to the *Buddha*. The *Buddha* then advised him to pronounce the following words of truth, which later came to be known as the "Angulimāla *paritta*":

> *"Sister, since my birth in the Ariya clan,*[238] *I know not that I have consciously destroyed the life of any living being. By this truth, may you be whole, and may your child be whole."*

He studied this *paritta*[239] and, going to the presence of the suffering woman, sat on a seat separated from her by a screen, and uttered these words. Instantly, she delivered the child with ease. The efficacy of this *paritta* persists to this day.

In due course, Venerable Angulimāla attained Arahantship. Referring to his memorable conversion by the *Buddha*, he said:

> *"Some creatures are subdued by force, some by the hook, and some by whips. But I was tamed by such a one who needed neither staff nor sword."*[240]

The Remaining Twenty-five Years

The *Buddha* spent the remaining twenty-five years of His life mostly in Sāvatthī at the Jetavana Monastery built by Anāthapiṇḍika, the millionaire, and partly at Pubbārāma, built by Visākhā, the chief benefactress. ■

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[238] That is, since his ordination.

[239] *Paritta* "protective discourse." The practice of reciting or listening to *paritta suttas* began very early in the history of Buddhism. In the Pāḷi literature, these short verses are recommended by the *Buddha* as providing protection from certain afflictions. The belief in the effective power to heal, or protect, of the *saccakiriya*, or asseveration of something quite true, is an aspect of the work ascribed to the *paritta*. It is also widely believed that all-night recitations of *paritta* by monks bring safety, peace, and well-being to a community. Such recitations also occur on auspicious occasions, such as the inauguration of a new temple or home or to provide blessings upon those who hear them recited. Conversely, *paritta* discourses are recited on inauspicious occasions as well, such as at a funeral or on the death anniversary of a love one.

[240] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, Pārāyaṇavagga, *Theragāthā.*

12

The Buddha's Daily Routine

"The Lord is awakened. He teaches the Dhamma for awakening."[241]

Introduction

The *Buddha* can be considered the most energetic and the most active of all religious teachers who ever lived on earth. The whole day, He was occupied with His religious activities, except when He was attending to His physical needs. He was methodical and systematic in the performance of His daily duties. His inner life was one of meditation and was concerned with the experience of Nibbānic Bliss, while His outer life was one of selfless service for the moral upliftment of the world. Himself enlightened, He endeavored His best to enlighten others and liberate them from the ills of life.

His day was divided into five parts, namely, (1) the Forenoon Session, (2) the Afternoon Session, (3) the First Watch, (4) the Middle Watch, and (5) the Last Watch.

The Forenoon Session

Usually, early in the morning, the *Buddha* surveyed the world with His Divine Eye to see whom He could help. If there were people who needed His spiritual assistance, He went to see them and helped them find the right path. In most cases, He went in search of the vicious and the impure, while the pure and virtuous came in search of Him. For instance, the *Buddha* went of His own accord to subdue the robber and murderer Angulimāla and the wicked demon Āḷavaka, but pious young Visākhā, the generous millionaire Anāthapiṇḍika, and the intellectual Sāriputta and Moggallāna came to Him for spiritual guidance.

While rendering such spiritual service to whomever needed it, if He was not invited by a lay supporter to some particular place, He, before whom Kings prostrated themselves, would go in quest of alms through alleys and streets, with bowl in hand, either alone or with His disciples. Standing silently at the door of each house, without uttering a word, He accepted whatever food was placed in His bowl and then returned to

[241] *Majjhima Nikāya*.

the monastery. Even in His eightieth year, when He was old and in indifferent health, He went on His rounds for alms in Vesālī.

Before midday, He finished His meals. Daily, just after eating, He would deliver a short discourse to the people, establish them in the Three Refuges (*ti-saraṇa*[242]) and the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*), and, if there were any among them who were spiritually advanced, show these particular individuals the Path to Sainthood. At times, He granted Ordination to them if they sought admission to the Order. Afterwards, He retired to His chamber.

The Afternoon Session

After completing His forenoon activities, He would take a seat in the monastery, and the *Bhikkhus* would assemble around Him to listen to His exposition of the *Dhamma*. Some would approach Him to receive suitable subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), according to their temperaments; others would pay due respect to Him and then retire to their cells to spend the afternoon in contemplation.

After His discourse or exhortation to His disciples, He retired to His private Perfumed Chamber to rest. If He so desired, He would lie on His right side and rest for a while with mindfulness. On rising, He attained to the Ecstasy of Great Compassion (*mahā karuṇā samāpatti*) and surveyed the world with His Divine Eye, especially the *Bhikkhus* who had retired to solitude for meditation and other disciples in order to give them any spiritual advice that might have been needed. If those who were in need of spiritual advice happened to be at a distance, He would use His psychic powers to go there. He would then instruct them, after which He returned to His chamber.

Towards evening, the lay followers flocked to Him to hear the *Dhamma*. Perceiving their innate tendencies and temperaments with the *Buddha*-Eye (*Buddhacakkhu*),[243] He preached to them for about an hour. Each member of the audience, though differently constituted, thought that the *Buddha's* discourse was directed, in particular, at him — such was the *Buddha's* method of expounding the *Dhamma*. As a rule, the *Buddha* converted others by explaining His teachings with homely illustrations and parables, for He appealed more to the intellect than the emotions.

To the average person, the *Buddha* first spoke of generosity, morality, and heavenly bliss. To the more advanced, He spoke on the evils of material pleasures and on the blessings of renunciation. To the highly advanced, He expounded the Four Noble Truths.

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[242] Sanskrit *tri-* "three," *śaraṇa* "refuge, protection; place of shelter, refuge, or rest; home, house, abode, lair, asylum."

[243] *Buddhacakkhu* constitutes the knowledge of one's inclinations and innate tendencies (*āsayānusaya-ñāṇa*) and the knowledge of the dullness or keenness of faculties such as confidence (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), energy (*viriya*), and wisdom (*paññā*).

On rare occasions, such as in the case of Angulimāla and Khemā, the *Buddha* resorted to the use of His psychic powers to bring about a change of heart in His listeners.

The sublime teachings of the *Buddha* appealed to both the masses and the intelligentsia alike. A Buddhist poet sings:

> *Giving joy to the wise, promoting the intelligence of the middling, and dispelling the darkness of the dull-witted, this speech is for all people.*[244]

Both the rich and the poor, the high and the low, renounced their former faiths and embraced the new Message of Peace. The newborn *sāsana*,[245] which was inaugurated with a nucleus of five ascetics, soon developed into millions of followers and peacefully spread throughout Central India.

The First Watch

This period extended from 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and was exclusively reserved for instruction to *Bhikkhus*. During this time, the *Bhikkhus* were free to approach the *Buddha* and get their doubts cleared, question Him on the intricacies of the *Dhamma*, obtain suitable subjects of meditation, and hear the doctrine.

The Middle Watch

During this period, which extended from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m., Celestial Beings such as *devas* and *brahmās*, who are not visible to ordinary humans, approached the *Buddha* to question Him on the *Dhamma*. An often-recurring passage in the *suttas* is:

> *"Now, when the night was far spent, a certain deva of unsurpassing splendor came to the Buddha, respectfully saluted Him, and stood at one side."*

Several discourses and answers given to their queries appear in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

The Last Watch

The wee hours of the morning, extending from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m., which make up the last watch, were divided into four parts.[246]

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[244] *Satapañcasataka*, verse 78.

[245] The Buddhist religion, teachings, doctrines.

[246] According to the *Dharmapradipikā*, the last watch was divided into four parts. According to the Commentaries, however, the last watch consisted of three parts. During the third part, the *Buddha* attained the Ecstasy of Great Compassion.

The first part, extending from 2:00 a.m. to 3:00 a.m., was spent in pacing back and forth (*caṅkamana*). This served as a form of mild exercise for the *Buddha*. During the second part, extending from 3:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m., He mindfully slept on His right side. During the third part, extending from 4:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m., He attained the state of Arahantship and experienced Nibbānic Bliss. Finally, during the fourth part, extending from 5:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m., He attained the Ecstasy of Great Compassion (*Mahā Karuṇā Samāpatti*) and radiated thoughts of loving-kindness towards all beings and softened their hearts. At this early hour, he surveyed the world with His *Buddha*-Eye to see whether He could be of service to anyone. The virtuous and those in need of His help appeared vividly before Him, though they might live at a remote distance. Out of compassion for them, He went to them of His own accord and rendered necessary spiritual assistance.

♦♦♦

The whole day, the *Buddha* was fully occupied with His religious duties. Unlike any other living being, He slept only one hour at night. For two full hours, in the early morning and at dawn, He pervaded the whole world with thoughts of boundless love and brought happiness to millions. Leading a life of voluntary poverty, seeking His alms without inconveniencing anyone, wandering from place to place for eight months throughout the year preaching His sublime *Dhamma*, He tirelessly worked for the good and happiness of all till His eightieth year. ■

13

The Buddha's Parinibbāna[247]

"The sun shines in the day; the moon shines in the night. The warrior shines in battle; the brāhmaṇa shines in meditation. But, day and night, the Buddha shines[248] *in radiance of love for all."*[249] [250]

Introduction

The *Buddha* was an extraordinary being. Nevertheless, He was mortal, subject to disease and decay, as are all beings. He was conscious of the fact that He would pass away in His eightieth year. Modest as He was, He decided to breathe His last breath not in renowned cities like Sāvatthī or Rājagaha, where His religious activities had been centered, but in the distant and insignificant hamlet of Kusinārā.

In His own words, the *Buddha*, in His eightieth year, was like "a worn-out cart." Though old in age, yet, being strong in will, He preferred to traverse the long and arduous way on foot, accompanied by His trusted attendant, Venerable Ānanda. It may be mentioned that both Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna, His two chief disciples, had predeceased Him. So had Venerable Rāhula and Venerable Yasodharā.

Conditions of Welfare

Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha, was the starting point of the *Buddha's* last journey.

Before His impending departure from Rājagaha, King Ajātasattu, who murdered his father, contemplating an unwarranted attack on the Vajjian Republic, sent his Prime

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[247] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, no. 16.

[248] The *Buddha* outshines immorality by the power of morality, vice by the power of virtue, ignorance by the power of wisdom, demerit by the power of merit, unrighteousness by the power of righteousness.

[249] The *Buddha* shines with five kinds of brilliance: (1) with the power of virtuous conduct, overcoming the power of vice; (2) with the power of goodness, overcoming the power of its absence; (3) with the power of true insight, overcoming the power of wrong views; (4) with the power of merit, overcoming its absence; and (5) with the power of *Dhamma*, overcoming the power of non-*Dhamma*.

[250] *Dhammapada*, XXVI, The Brāhmaṇa, verse 387.

Minister, Vassakāra, to the *Buddha* to ascertain the *Buddha's* views concerning this wicked plan.

The *Buddha* declared that (1) as long as the Vajjians meet frequently and hold many meetings; (2) as long as they meet together in unity, rise in unity, and perform their duties in unity; (3) as long as they enact nothing not enacted and act in accordance with the already-established ancient Vajjian principles; (4) as long as they support, respect, venerate, and honor the Vajjian elders and pay regard to their worthy speech; (5) as long as no women or girls of their families are detained by force or abduction; (6) as long as they support, respect, venerate, and honor those objects of worship — both internal and external — and do not neglect those righteous ceremonies held before; and (7) as long as the rightful protection, defense, and support for the *Arahants* shall be provided by the Vajjians so that *Arahants* who have not yet come may enter the realm and those who have entered the realm may live in peace, so long shall the Vajjians be expected not to decline but to prosper.

Hearing these seven conditions of welfare, which the *Buddha* himself taught the Vajjians, the Prime Minister, Vassakāra, took leave of the *Buddha*, fully convinced that the Vajjians could not be overcome by the King of Magadha in battle, without diplomacy or breaking up their alliance.

Thereupon, the *Buddha* availed Himself of this opportunity to teach seven similar conditions of welfare mainly for the benefit of His disciples. He summoned together all of the *Bhikkhus* of Rājagaha and said:

> *"As long, O disciples, as the Bhikkhus assemble frequently and hold frequent meetings;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus meet together in unity, rise in unity, and perform the duties of the Sangha in unity;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus shall promulgate nothing that has not been promulgated, do not abolish what has been promulgated, and act in accordance with the already-established rules;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus support, respect, venerate, and honor those long-ordained Theras of experience, the fathers and leaders of the Order, and respect their worthy speech;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus do not fall under the influence of uprisen attachment that leads to repeated birth;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus shall delight in forest retreats;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus develop mindfulness within themselves so that disciplined co-celibates who have not yet come may do so and those who are already present may live in peace, so long shall the Bhikkhus be expected not to decline but to prosper.*
>
> *"As long as these seven conditions of welfare shall continue to exist among the Bhikkhus, as long as the Bhikkhus are well-instructed in these conditions, so long shall they be expected not to decline but to prosper."*

With boundless compassion, the *Buddha* enlightened the *Bhikkhus* on seven other conditions of welfare, as follows:

> *"As long as the Bhikkhus shall not be fond of, nor delight in, nor engage in business;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus shall not be fond of, nor delight in, nor engage in gossiping;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus shall not be fond of, nor delight in, nor engage in sleeping;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus shall not be fond of, nor delight in, nor engage in society;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus shall neither have nor fall under the influence of base desires;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus shall not have evil friends or associates;*
>
> *"As long as the Bhikkhus shall not be prone to evil, so long shall the Bhikkhus not stop at mere lesser, special acquisition without attaining Arahantship."*

Furthermore, the *Buddha* added that, as long as the *Bhikkhus* shall be devout, modest, conscientious, full of learning, persistently energetic, constantly mindful, and full of wisdom, so long shall the *Bhikkhus* be expected not to decline but to prosper.

Sāriputta's Praise

After enlightening the *Bhikkhus* with several other discourses, the *Buddha*, accompanied by Venerable Ānanda, left Rājagaha and went to Ambalaṭṭhika and, from there, to Nālandā, where He stayed at the Pāvārika Grove. On this occasion, Venerable Sāriputta approached the *Buddha* and praised the wisdom of the *Buddha*, saying:

> *"Lord, so pleased am I with the Exalted One that I think there never was, nor will there ever be, nor is there now, any other ascetic or Brahmin who is greater and wiser than the Buddha as regards self-enlightenment."*

The *Buddha*, who did not approve of such praise from His disciples, reminded Venerable Sāriputta that he had burst into such a song of praise without fully appreciating the merits of the *Buddhas* of the past and of the future.

Venerable Sāriputta acknowledged that he did not have first-hand knowledge of all the supremely Enlightened Ones but maintained that he was acquainted with the *Dhamma* lineage, the process through which one attains supreme Buddhahood, that is, (1)

by overcoming the five Hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*);[251] (2) by weakening the strong Passions (*kilesa*)[252] of the heart through Wisdom (*paññā*); (3) by thoroughly establishing the mind in the four kinds of Mindfulness (*sati*);[253] and (4) by rightly developing the seven Factors of Enlightenment (*bojjhanga*).[254]

Pāṭaliputta

From Nālandā, the *Buddha* proceeded to Pāṭaligāma, where Sunīdha and Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, were building a fortress to repel the powerful Vajjians. Here, the *Buddha* resided in an empty house and, perceiving, with His supernormal vision, thousands of deities haunting the area, predicted that Pāṭaliputta[255] would become the chief city of the area — a trading center and a place for the exchange of all kinds of wares —, inasmuch as it was the residence for *Ariyas*. However, He cautioned that it would also be subject to three dangers arising from fire, water, and dissension.

Hearing of the *Buddha's* arrival at Pāṭaligāma, Sunīdha and Vassakāra invited Him and His disciples for a meal on the following day. After the meal was over, when the *Buddha* had eaten and no longer had His bowl in hand, the ministers sat down at one side on lower seats. Thereupon, the *Buddha* exhorted them as follows:

> *"Wheresoever a wise man shall make his abode, there, let him support the virtuous, who live self-controlled, and give the merit of his gifts to the deities who haunt the spot. Revered, they will revere him; honored, they will honor him again. They will be gracious to him as a mother is to her only child. And the man who has the grace of the gods will behold good fortune."*[256]

The *Buddha* then left His seat and went away, but Sunīdha and Vassakāra followed Him. In honor of the *Buddha's* visit to the city, the ministers desired to name the gate by which He left "Gotama-Gate." They also desired to name the ferry by which

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[251] Namely, (1) desire for gratification of the senses; (2) ill will; (3) sloth and torpor; (4) restlessness and worry; and (5) indecisiveness.

[252] There are ten Passions or Defilements, thus called because they are themselves defiled and because they defile the mental factors (*cetasika*) associated with them. They are: (1) greed (*lobha*); (2) hatred (*dosa*); (3) delusion (*moha*); (4) conceit (*māna*); (5) wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*); (6) speculative doubt (*vicikicchā*); (7) mental torpor (*thīna*); (8) restlessness (*middha*); (9) shamelessness (*ahirika*); and (10) lack of moral dread or unconscientiousness (*anottappa*).

[253] That is, mindfulness (1) of the body; (2) of feelings; (3) of the mind; and (4) of mental objects.

[254] That is, (1) mindfulness; (2) investigation of the Truth (*Dhamma-vicaya*, that is, "seeking knowledge", specifically, knowledge of the Four Noble Truths); (3) energy; (4) joy; (5) relaxation; (6) concentration; and (7) equanimity.

[255] The village of Pāṭaligāma was renamed Pāṭaliputta with the building of the new town. Today, this is the site of Patna. At a later date, it became famous as the capital of Asoka's empire, which had grown out of the kingdom of Magadha.

[256] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, no. 16.

He would cross the Ganges "Gotama-Ferry." Thereafter, the gate by which the *Buddha* left was named "Gotama-Gate," but, when the *Buddha* came to the Ganges, He crossed the overflowing river by His psychic powers, while the others were making preparations to cross by means of the ferry.

Future States

After crossing the Ganges, the *Buddha* went to Koṭigāma and thence to the village of Nādikā, where He stayed at the Brick Hall. Thereupon, Venerable Ānanda approached the *Buddha* and respectfully questioned Him about the future states of several people who had died in that village. The *Buddha* patiently revealed the destinies of the persons concerned and then taught how to acquire the Mirror of Truth so that an *ariya* disciple, so endowed, may know of himself:

> *"Destroyed for me is birth in a woeful state, animal realm, peta*[257] *realm, and sorrowful, evil, and low states. A Stream-Winner am I, not subject to fall, assured of final Enlightenment."*

The Mirror of the Dhamma (Dhammādāsa)

> "*What, O Ānanda, is the Mirror of the Dhamma?*
>
> *"Herein, a noble disciple has absolute confidence in the Buddha, reflecting on His virtues thus:*
>
> *"Thus, indeed, is the Exalted One, a Worthy One, a Fully Enlightened One, perfect in wisdom and conduct, an Accomplished One, Knower of the worlds, an Incomparable Charioteer for the training of mankind, the Teacher of gods and men, Omniscient, and Holy.*
>
> *"He has absolute confidence in the Dhamma, reflecting on the characteristics of the Dhamma thus:*
>
> *"Well-taught is the Dhamma by the Exalted One, to be self-realized, immediately effective, inviting investigation, leading onwards,*[258] *to be understood by the wise, each one for himself.*

[257] Sanskrit *preta* "hungry ghost." The entire universe is made up of three spheres of existence: (1) the sensory sphere (*kāma-loka*); (2) the fine-material sphere (*rūpa-loka*); and (3) the immaterial sphere (*arūpa-loka*). The sensory sphere includes the hells (*niraya*), the demon realm (*asura-nikāya*), the realm of hungry ghosts (*peta-loka*), the animal kingdom (*tiracchāna-yoni*), the human realm (*manussa-loka*), and the six lower celestial realms (*deva-loka*). In the fine-material sphere (*rūpa-loka*), the faculties of seeing and hearing still exist. In the immaterial sphere (*arūpa-loka*), there is no corporeality whatsoever — only the four mental groups exist there. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 106—107.

[258] That is, leading to *nibbāna*.

"He has absolute confidence in the Sangha, reflecting on the virtues of the Sangha thus:

"Of good conduct is the Order of the disciples of the Exalted One; of upright conduct is the Order of the disciples of the Exalted One; of wise conduct is the Order of the disciples of the Exalted One. These four pairs of persons constitute eight individuals.[259] *The Order of the disciples of the Exalted One is worthy of gifts, of hospitality, of offerings, and of reverence and is an incomparable field of merit to the world.*

"He becomes endowed with virtuous conduct pleasing to the Noble Ones, unbroken, intact, unspotted, unblemished, free, praised by the wise, untarnished by desires, conducive to concentration."

From Nādikā, the *Buddha* went to the flourishing city of Vesālī and stayed in the mango grove of the beautiful courtesan Ambapālī. Anticipating her visit, the *Buddha* advised His disciples to be mindful and reflective and taught them the way of mindfulness so that they would not be distracted by Ambapālī's charms.

Ambapālī

Ambapālī heard that the *Buddha* had come to Vesālī and was staying in her mango (*amba*) grove. She had a number of carriages made ready. She climbed into one of the coaches and drove out of Vesālī towards her mango grove, going as far along the way as was passable for carriages. She then got out of the coach and went the rest of the way on foot to where the Blessed One was staying. Upon her arrival, she paid homage to Him and then sat down at one side. After she was seated, the *Buddha* instructed, roused, and encouraged her with a discourse on the *Dhamma*. Thereupon, Ambapālī respectfully invited the Blessed One and His disciples for a meal on the following day. The *Buddha* accepted her invitation in preference to the invitation of the Licchavi Nobles, which He had received after Ambapālī's invitation. Although the Licchavi Nobles offered her a large sum of money to obtain the opportunity to provide this meal for the *Buddha* and His disciples, she refused their offer. As invited, the *Buddha* and His disciples had their meal at Ambapālī's residence. After the meal, Ambapālī very generously offered her spacious mango grove to the *Buddha* and His disciples.[260]

After the Blessed One had stayed in Ambapālī's grove for as long as He chose, He said to Venerable Ānanda: "Come, Ānanda, let us go to Beluvagāma." Thereupon, the *Buddha* traveled to Beluvagāma with a large company of *Bhikkhus*. It was at Beluvagāma, a village near Vesālī, that He spent His last and forty-fifth Retreat.

[259] The "four pairs of persons constitute eight individuals" refers to one who has attained the Path and one who has attained its fruition in the case of each of the four stages of Sainthood.
[260] Later, Ambapālī entered the Order and attained Arahantship.

The Buddha's Illness

After taking up residence for the rains at Beluvagāma, the *Buddha* suffered from a severe illness, and "sharp pains came upon Him even unto death." With His iron will, the *Buddha* bore these pains without any complaint.

The *Buddha* was now conscious that He would soon pass away. But He thought that it would not be proper to pass away without addressing His attendant disciples and giving instructions to the Order. Therefore, He decided to subdue His illness by means of His will and live by constantly experiencing the bliss of Arahantship.

Immediately after His recovery, the *Buddha* was approached by Venerable Ānanda, who, expressing his pleasure at the *Buddha's* recovery, remarked that he took some small comfort from the thought that the *Buddha* would not pass away without giving instructions to the Order.

> *"I have been accustomed to seeing the Blessed One in comfort and in health, Lord. Indeed, with the Blessed One's illness, I felt as if my own body were quite rigid, I could not see straight, and my ideas were all unclear. However, Lord, I comforted myself knowing that the Blessed One would not attain final nibbāna without giving instructions to the Sangha."*

The Buddha's Exhortation

> *"What, O Ānanda, does the Order of disciples expect of me? I have taught the Dhamma, making no distinction between esoteric and exoteric doctrine.*[261] *Concerning the truths, the Tathāgata has no closed fist. It may occur to someone: 'It is I who will lead the Order of Bhikkhus,' or 'The Order of Bhikkhus is dependent upon me,' or 'It is he who should instruct any matter having to do with the Bhikkhus.'*
>
> *"Since, Ānanda, the Tathāgata, Himself, does not think that it is He who should lead the Order of Bhikkhus or that the Order is dependent on Him, why, then, should the Tathāgata leave instructions concerning any matter having to do with the Order?*
>
> *"I, too, Ānanda, am now decrepit, aged, old, advanced in years, and have reached my end. I am in my eightieth year. Just as a worn-out cart is made to move with the aid of straps, even so the body of the Tathāgata is moved with the*

[261] These two terms refer to both individuals and teachings. "This much of my doctrine will I not teach others" — such a thought means limiting the *Dhamma* to an inner circle. "This much of my doctrine will I teach others" — such a thought means barring the *Dhamma* to others. "To this person I shall teach" — such a thought means limiting the *Dhamma* to a single person. "To this person I shall not teach" — such a thought means excluding a particular individual. The *Buddha* made no distinction with regard to both His Teaching and His disciples. The *Buddha* had nothing hidden in His Teachings. Nor did He have an inner circle or an outer circle among His disciples.

aid of straps. Whenever, Ānanda, the Tathāgata lives plunged in signless mental one-pointedness, by the cessation of certain feelings and unmindful of all objects, then only is the body of the Tathāgata at ease.[262]

"Therefore, Ānanda, be islands unto yourselves. Be a refuge unto yourselves — do not seek external refuge. Live with the Dhamma as your island, the Dhamma as your refuge. Do not depend on external refuge.

"How, Ānanda, does a Bhikkhu live as an island unto himself, as a refuge unto himself, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, seeking no external refuge?

"Here, Ānanda, a Bhikkhu lives strenuous, reflective, watchful, abandoning covetousness in this world, constantly developing mindfulness with respect to body, feelings, consciousness, and dhamma.[263]

"Whosoever shall live, either now or after my death, as an island unto oneself, as a refuge unto oneself, seeking no external refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, seeking no external refuge, those Bhikkhus shall be foremost among those who are intent upon discipline."

Here, the *Buddha* lays special emphasis on the importance of individual striving for purification and deliverance from the ills of life. There is no efficacy in praying to others or in depending on others. One might question why Buddhists should seek refuge in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha* when the *Buddha* had explicitly advised His followers not to seek refuge in others. In seeking refuge in the Triple Gem,[264] Buddhists are merely paying homage to the *Buddha* as an instructor who has shown the Path of Deliverance, to the *Dhamma* as the only path, way, or means to Deliverance, and to the *Sangha* as living examples of the way life is to be lived. By merely seeking refuge in them, Buddhists do not consider that they will gain their Deliverance.

Though old and feeble, the *Buddha* not only availed Himself of every opportunity to instruct the *Bhikkhus* in various ways but also regularly went on His rounds for alms with bowl in hand when there were no private invitations. One day as usual, He went in quest of alms in Vesālī and, after His meal, went with Venerable Ānanda to the Capala Cetiya and, speaking of the delightfulness of Vesālī and other shrines in the city, addressed Venerable Ānanda thus:

"Whosoever has cultivated, developed, mastered, made a basis of, experienced, practiced, thoroughly acquired the four Means of Accomplishment (iddhipāda),[265]

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[262] This refers to the bliss of Arahantship.

[263] These are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Here, the term *dhamma* is used in a different sense and cannot adequately be rendered by any single English word — it refers to both mental and physical objects.

[264] That is, the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha* — also called the "Three Jewels."

[265] The four Means of Accomplishment are: (1) concentration of intention (*chanda*), accompanied by effort of will (*padhāna-saṁkhāra-samannāgata*); (2) concentration of energy (*viriya*); (3) concentration of consciousness (*citta*); and (4) concentration of investigation (*vimaṁsā*), accompanied by effort of will.

> *could, if he so desires, live for an eon (kappa)*[266] *or even a little longer (kappāvasesaṁ). The Tathāgata, O Ānanda, has cultivated, developed, mastered, made a basis of, experienced, practiced, thoroughly acquired the four Means of Accomplishment. If He so desires, the Tathāgata could remain for an eon or even a little longer."*

The text adds that:

> *Even though a suggestion so evident and so clear was thus given by the Exalted One, Venerable Ānanda was incapable of comprehending it so as to beseech the Buddha to remain for an eon for the good, benefit, and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit, and happiness of gods and men.*

The *sutta* attributes the reason to the fact that the mind of Venerable Ānanda was, at the moment, dominated by Māra, the Evil One.[267]

The Buddha Announces His Death

The *Buddha* appeared on earth to teach the seekers of Truth things as they truly are and a unique Path for the Deliverance of all ills of life. During His long and successful ministry, He fulfilled His noble mission to the satisfaction of both Himself and His followers. In His eightieth year, He felt that His work was over. He had given all necessary instructions to His earnest followers — both the householders and the homeless ones —, and they were not only firmly established in His Teachings but were also capable of expounding them to others. Hence, He decided not to control the remainder of His life-span by His will-power and by experiencing the bliss of Arahantship. While residing at the Capala Cetiya, the *Buddha* announced to Venerable Ānanda that He would pass away in three months' time. Thereupon, Venerable Ānanda recalled what the *Buddha* had said earlier and begged Him to live for an eon (*kappa*) for the good, benefit, and happiness of all. The *Buddha* replied:

> *"Enough, Ānanda, do not beseech the Tathāgata. The time for making such a request is now past."*

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[266] Here the term *kappa* (Sanskrit *kalpa*) means the normal human life-span, which was about 100 years. *Kappāvasesaṁ* means an extra fraction of a *kappa* — about 120 years or so.

[267] As pointed out by John Snelling (*The Buddhist Handbook* [Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions (1991)], p. 32): "This is certainly an apocryphal touch and does poor justice to Ānanda, whom the Buddha himself praised as being exemplary in his devotion: 'Your acts of love and kindness have been invariable and are beyond measure'."

The *Buddha* then spoke on the fleeting nature of life and went with Venerable Ānanda to the Pinnacled Hall at Mahāvana and requested him to assemble all the *Bhikkhus* in the neighborhood of Vesālī.

After the *Bhikkhus* had been assembled, the *Buddha* spoke to them as follows:

> "*Whatever truths have been expounded to you by me, study them well; practice, cultivate, and develop them so that this Holy Life may last long and be perpetuated out of compassion for the world, for the good and happiness of the many, for the good and happiness of gods and men.*
>
> *"What are those truths? They are: The Four Foundations of Mindfulness; the Four Kinds of Right Endeavor; the Four Means of Accomplishment; the Five Faculties; the Five Powers; the Seven Factors of Enlightenment; and the Noble Eightfold Path."*[268]

The *Buddha* then gave the following exhortation and publicly announced the time of His death to the *Sangha*:

> "*Behold, O Bhikkhus, transient are all conditioned things. Strive on with diligence. The passing away of the Tathāgata will take place before long. At the end of three months from now, the Tathāgata will pass away.*
>
> *"Ripe is my age. Short is my life. Leaving you, I shall depart. I have made myself my refuge. O Bhikkhus, be diligent, mindful, and virtuous. With well-directed thoughts, guard your mind. He who lives heedfully in this Dispensation will escape life's wandering and put an end to suffering."*

Casting His glance at Vesālī, the *Buddha* went with Venerable Ānanda to Bhaṇḍagāma, and, addressing the *Bhikkhus*, said:

> "*Morality, concentration, wisdom, and deliverance supreme — these things were realized by the renowned Gotama.*
>
> *"Comprehending them, the Buddha taught the doctrine to His disciples.*
>
> *"The Teacher is He whose vision has put an end to sorrow and has extinguished all passions."*

The Four Great References

Passing thence from village to village, the *Buddha* arrived at Bhoganagara and there taught the Four Great Citations or References (*mahāpadesa*) by means of which the word of the *Buddha* could be tested and clarified:

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[268] These are the thirty-seven Requisites of Enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhammā*).

(1) *"A Bhikkhu may say thus: 'From the mouth of the Buddha Himself have I heard, have I received, thus: "This is the Doctrine, this is the Discipline, this is the Teaching of the Master".' His words should neither be accepted nor rejected. Without either accepting or rejecting such words, study every word and every expression and then put them beside the Discourses and compare them with the Disciplinary Rules. If, when so compared, they do not agree with the Discourses and do not agree with the Disciplinary Rules, then, you may come to the conclusion: 'Certainly, this is not the word of the Exalted One, this has been wrongly grasped by the Bhikkhu.' Therefore, you should reject it.*

"If, when compared and contrasted, such words agree with the Discourses and Disciplinary Rules, you should come to the conclusion: 'Certainly, this is the word of the Exalted One, this has been correctly grasped by the Bhikkhu.'

"Let this be regarded as the First Great Reference.

(2) *"Again, a Bhikkhu may say thus: 'In such and such monastery lives the Sangha together with leading Elders. From the mouth of that Sangha, have I heard, have I received, thus: "This is the Doctrine, this is the Discipline, this is the Teaching of the Master".' His words should neither be accepted nor rejected. Without either accepting or rejecting such words, study every word and every expression and then put them beside the Discourses and compare them with the Disciplinary Rules. If, when so compared, they do not agree with the Discourses and do not agree with the Disciplinary Rules, then, you may come to the conclusion: 'Certainly, this is not the word of the Exalted One, this has been wrongly grasped by the Bhikkhu.' Therefore, you should reject it.*

"If, when compared and contrasted, such words agree with the Discourses and Disciplinary Rules, you should come to the conclusion: 'Certainly, this is the word of the Exalted One, this has been correctly grasped by the Bhikkhu.'

"Let this be regarded as the Second Great Reference.

(3) *"Again, a Bhikkhu may say thus: 'In such and such monastery live many Elders and Bhikkhus of great learning, versed in the Teachings, proficient in the Doctrine, Disciplinary Rules, and Higher Learning. From the mouth of these Elders have I heard, have I received, thus: "This is the Doctrine, this is the Discipline, this is the Teaching of the Master".' His words should neither be accepted nor rejected. Without either accepting or rejecting such words, study every word and every expression and then put them beside the Discourses and compare them with the Disciplinary Rules. If, when so compared, they do not agree with the Discourses and do not agree with the Disciplinary Rules, then, you may come to the conclusion: 'Certainly, this is not the word of the Exalted One, this has been wrongly grasped by the Bhikkhu.' Therefore, you should reject it.*

"If, when compared and contrasted, such words agree with the Discourses and Disciplinary Rules, you should come to the conclusion: 'Certainly, this is the word of the Exalted One, this has been correctly grasped by the Bhikkhu.'

"Let this be regarded as the Third Great Reference.

(4) *"Again, a Bhikkhu may say thus: 'In such and such monastery lives an elderly Bhikkhu of great learning, versed in the Teachings, proficient in the Dhamma, Disciplinary Rules, and Higher Learning. From the mouth of that Elder, have I heard, have I received, thus: "This is the Doctrine, this is the Discipline, this is the Teaching of the Master".' His words should neither be accepted nor rejected. Without either accepting or rejecting such words, study every word and every expression and then put them beside the Discourses and compare them with the Disciplinary Rules. If, when so compared, they do not agree with the Discourses and do not agree with the Disciplinary Rules, then, you may come to the conclusion: 'Certainly, this is not the word of the Exalted One, this has been wrongly grasped by the Bhikkhu.' Therefore, you should reject it.*

"If, when compared and contrasted, such words agree with the Discourses and Disciplinary Rules, you should come to the conclusion: 'Certainly, this is the word of the Exalted One, this has been correctly grasped by the Bhikkhu.'

"Let this be regarded as the Fourth Great Reference.

"These, Bhikkhus, are the Four Great References."

The Buddha's Last Meal

Enlightening His disciples with such edifying discourses, the *Buddha* proceeded to Pāvā, where He and His disciples were hosted by Cunda, the smith. With great fervor, Cunda prepared a special, delicious dish called *sūkaramaddava*.[269] As advised by the *Buddha*, Cunda served only the *Buddha* with *sūkaramaddava* and buried the remainder in the ground.

After the meal, the *Buddha* suffered from an attack of dysentery, and sharp pains came upon Him. He bore them calmly, without any complaint.

Though extremely weak and severely ill, the *Buddha* decided to walk to Kusinārā, His last resting-place, a distance of some six miles from Pāvā.[270] In the course of His last journey, it is stated that the *Buddha* had to sit down in about twenty-five places owing to His weakness and illness.

Along the way, He sat at the foot of a tree and asked Venerable Ānanda to fetch some water inasmuch as He was feeling thirsty. With difficulty, Venerable Ānanda

[269] Literally, "pig's delight." According to the Commentary, this dish consists of flesh of a boar neither too young nor too old, but not killed for the *Buddha's* sake. According to others, however, it is a kind of mushroom or truffles. It has also been claimed to be a special kind of dish by that name or a nutritious food, or delicacy (*rasāyana*), with hallucinogenic or medicinal properties. What is quite clear is that the ancient commentators did not know for certain what the term *sūkaramaddava* meant.

[270] According to the Commentary, the *Buddha* chose Kusinārā to pass away for three reasons: (1) to preach the Mahāsudassana Sutta in order to inspire people to be more virtuous; (2) to convert Subhadda, His last disciple, who could not have been converted by anyone other than the *Buddha* Himself; and (3) to enable Doṇa, a Brahmin, to distribute His relics among His followers.

secured some fresh water from a streamlet which, only a few minutes earlier, had been flowing foul and turbid, stirred up by the wheels of five hundred carts.

At that time, a man named Pukkusa — a disciple of Āḷāra Kālāma — approached the *Buddha* and expressed his admiration at the serenity of the *Buddha*. Thereupon, the *Buddha* delivered a discourse on His imperturbability, after which Pukkusa offered Him a pair of golden robes. As directed by the *Buddha*, Pukkusa presented one of the robes to the *Buddha* and the other to Venerable Ānanda.

After Pukkusa had left, Venerable Ānanda placed the pair of robes on the *Buddha* and, to his astonishment, found the skin of the *Buddha* to be exceedingly bright, at which he said:

> *"How wonderful a thing it is, Lord, and how marvelous, that the color of the skin of the Exalted One should be so clear, so exceedingly bright. For, when I placed even this pair of robes of burnished gold and ready for wear on the body of the Exalted One, it seemed as if they had lost their splendor."*

Thereupon, the *Buddha* explained that, on two occasions, the color of the skin of the *Tathāgata* becomes clear and exceedingly bright, namely, on the night when the *Tathāgata* attains Buddhahood and on the night when the *Tathāgata* passes away.

The *Buddha* then announced that, on the third watch of the night on that day, He would pass away in the Sāla Grove of the Mallians between the twin *sāla* trees, in the vicinity of Kusinārā.

Cunda's Meritorious Meal

The *Buddha* took His last bath in the river Kukutthā and, resting for a while, spoke thus:

> *"Now, it may happen Ānanda, that someone may stir up resentment towards Cunda the smith, saying: 'This is evil to you, Cunda, and a loss to you that, when the Tathāgata had eaten His last meal from food prepared by you, then He died.' Any such resentment towards Cunda the smith should be checked by saying: 'This is good to you, Cunda, and a gain to you that, when the Tathāgata had eaten His last meal from food prepared by you, then He died.' From the very mouth of the Exalted One, Cunda, have I heard, from His very mouth have I received this saying: 'These two offerings of food are of equal fruit and of equal profit and of much greater fruit and of much greater profit than any other. And, what are the two? The offering of food which, when a Tathāgata has eaten, He attains to supreme and perfect insight, and the offering of food which, when a Tathāgata has eaten, He passes away to that utter cessation in which nothing whatever remains behind — these two offerings of food are of equal fruit and of equal profit and of much greater fruit and of much greater profit than any other.*

There has been laid up by Cunda the smith a kamma redounding to length of life, redounding to good birth, redounding to good fortune, redounding to good fame, redounding to the inheritance of heaven and of sovereign power.' In this way, Ānanda, should be checked any resentment towards Cunda the smith."

The *Buddha* then proclaimed:

"When a man gives, his merit will increase;
No enmity can grow in those who are restrained.
Those who are skilled shun evil; they attain nibbāna
By ending greed, hatred, and delusion."

After uttering these words of consolation, out of compassion to the generous donor of His last meal, the *Buddha* went to the Sāla Grove of the Mallians and asked Venerable Ānanda to prepare a couch with the head toward the north between the twin *sāla* trees. The *Buddha* then laid Himself down on His right side, with one leg resting on the other, mindful and self-possessed.

How the Buddha is Honored

Seeing the *sāla* trees blooming with flowers out of season, and other outward demonstrations of piety, the *Buddha* exhorted His disciples thus:

"This is not the way, Ānanda, that the Tathāgata is respected, reverenced, venerated, honored, and revered. Whatever Bhikkhu or Bhikkhunī, Upāsaka or Upāsikā[271] *lives in accordance with the Teaching, conducts himself dutifully, and acts righteously, it is he who respects, reverences, venerates, honors, and reveres the Tathāgata with the highest homage. Therefore, Ānanda, you should train yourselves thus: 'Let us live in accordance with the Teaching, conducting ourselves dutifully, and acting righteously'."*

At this moment, Venerable Upavāna, who had once been an attendant of the *Buddha*, was standing in front of the *Buddha* fanning Him. The *Buddha* asked him to stand aside. Venerable Ānanda wished to know why Upavāna was asked to stand aside,

[271] *Upāsaka* and *Upāsikā* are male and female lay followers respectively. These terms refer to any lay follower who is filled with faith and who has taken refuge in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*. Their virtue is considered pure if they observe the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*): (1) abstaining from taking life; (2) from taking what is not freely given; (3) from sexual misconduct; (4) from false speech; and (5) from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness. They should also avoid the following kinds of wrong livelihood: (1) trading in arms; (2) in living beings; (3) in meat; (4) in alcohol; and (5) in poison. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 218.

inasmuch as he was very serviceable to the *Buddha*. The *Buddha* replied that *devas* had assembled in large numbers to see the *Tathāgata*, and they were displeased because Upavāna was standing in their way concealing Him.

The Four Sacred Places

The *Buddha* then spoke of four places, made sacred by His association, which faithful followers should visit with reverence and awe — they are:

1. The birthplace of the *Buddha*;[272]
2. The place where the *Buddha* attained Enlightenment;[273]
3. The place where the *Buddha* established the incomparable Wheel of Truth (*Dhamma-cakka*);[274]
4. The place where the *Buddha* attained *parinibbāna*.[275]

And the *Buddha* added:

> *"And they who die with a believing heart, in the course of their journey, will be reborn, on the dissolution of their body, after death, in a heavenly state."*

Conversion of Subhadda

At that time, a wandering ascetic named Subhadda[276] was living at Kusinārā. He had heard the news that the Ascetic Gotama would attain *parinibbānā* in the last watch of the night. And he thought:

> *"I have heard mature and trustworthy teachers, their teachers, and the wandering ascetics say that seldom, and very seldom, indeed, do Exalted, Fully-Enlightened Arahants arise in this world. Tonight, in the last watch, the Ascetic Gotama will attain parinibbāna. A doubt has arisen in me, and I have confidence in the Ascetic Gotama. Capable, indeed, is the Ascetic Gotama to teach the doctrine so that I might dispel my doubt."*

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[272] Lumbinī, on the Indian borders of Nepal.
[273] Bodhgaya, about eight miles from the Gayā station.
[274] Sārnāth.
[275] Kusinārā (modern Kasiā), about thirty-two miles from Gotakhpur station.
[276] This Subhadda should be distinguished from another Subhadda who entered the Order in his old age. It was the latter who remarked that the death of the *Buddha* was not an occasion for sorrow since the *Bhikkhus* were free to do whatever they liked, without being bound by the injunctions of the Master. This remark by Subhadda prompted Venerable Kassapa to take immediate steps to hold a convocation to preserve the purity of the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya*.

Thereupon, Subhadda, the wandering ascetic, went to the Upavatana Sāla Grove of the Mallians, where Venerable Ānanda was, and, approaching him, spoke as follows:

> *"I have heard mature and trustworthy teachers, their teachers, and the wandering ascetics say that seldom, and very seldom, indeed, do Exalted, Fully-Enlightened Arahants arise in this world. Tonight, in the last watch, the Ascetic Gotama will attain parinibbāna. A doubt has arisen in me, and I have confidence in the Ascetic Gotama. Capable, indeed, is the Ascetic Gotama to teach the doctrine so that I might dispel my doubt. May I, O Ānanda, obtain a glimpse of the Ascetic Gotama?"*

Venerable Ānanda replied:

> *"Enough, friend Subhadda, do not disturb the Accomplished One. The Exalted One is wearied."*

For the second and third time, Subhadda repeated his request, and, for the second and third time, Venerable Ānanda replied in the same manner.

The *Buddha* heard the conversation between Venerable Ānanda and Subhadda and, addressing Ānanda, said:

> *"Nay, Ānanda, do not prevent Subhadda. Let Subhadda, O Ānanda, behold the Accomplished One. Whatsoever Subhadda will ask of me, all that will be with the desire for knowledge and not to annoy me. And, whatever I shall say in answer, he will readily understand."*

Thereupon, Venerable Ānanda introduced Subhadda to the *Buddha*. Subhadda exchanged friendly greetings with the *Buddha* and, sitting aside, said:

> *"There are those ascetics and priests, O Gotama, who are leaders of companies and congregations, who are heads of sects and are well-known, renowned religious teachers, esteemed as good men by the multitudes, as, for instance, Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalī, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta*[277] *— have they all, as they claim, thoroughly understood the Truth or not, or have some of them understood and some not?*
>
> *"Let it be, O Subhadda! Do not trouble yourself as to whether all or some have realized it or not. I shall teach the Doctrine to you. Listen, and bear it well in mind. I shall speak."*
>
> *"So be it, Lord."*

[277] They all flourished at the time of the *Buddha*. Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, also known as Mahāvīra, was the founder of Jainism.

The *Buddha* then spoke as follows:

> *"In whatever Dispensation the Noble Eightfold Path does not exist, neither is the First Samaṇa,*[278] [279] *nor the Second,*[280] *nor the Third,*[281] *nor the Fourth*[282] *to be found therein. In whatever Dispensation, O Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path does exist, there is to be found the First Samaṇa, the Second Samaṇa, the Third Samaṇa, and the Fourth Samaṇa. In this Dispensation,*[283] *O Subhadda, there exists the Noble Eightfold Path.*
>
> *"Here, indeed, are found the First Samaṇa, the Second Samaṇa, the Third Samaṇa, and the Fourth Samaṇa. The various other schools are empty of Samaṇas.*[284] *If, O Subhadda, the disciples live rightly, the world would not be void of Arahants.*
>
> *"I was twenty-nine years old when I went forth as a seeker after what is good. Now, fifty-one years have passed since I entered the homeless life. Outside this fold, there is not a single ascetic who acts even partly in accordance with this realizable Doctrine."*

Thereupon, Subhadda spoke to the *Buddha* as follows:

> *"Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if, O Lord, a man were to set upright that which was overturned, or were to reveal that which was hidden, or were to point the way to one who has gone astray, or were to hold a lamp amidst the darkness, so that whoever has eyes may see, even so has the doctrine been expounded in various ways by the Exalted One.*
>
> *"And I, Lord, seek refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. May I receive the Lesser and the Higher Ordination in the presence of the Exalted One."*

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[278] *Samaṇa* means "wanderer, recluse, ascetic." It also refers to the Four Stages of Sainthood.

[279] The First *Samaṇa* is the *Sotapānna* "Stream-Winner," the first stage of Sainthood.

[280] The Second *Samaṇa* is the *Sakadāgāmī* "Once-Returner," the second stage of Sainthood.

[281] The Third *Samaṇa* is the *Anāgāmī* "Non-Returner," the third stage of Sainthood.

[282] The Fourth *Samaṇa* is the *Arahant* "Worthy One," who is the perfect Saint. This is the fourth and final stage of Sainthood.

[283] That is, the Dispensation (*sāsana*) of the *Buddha*. The Pāḷi term *sāsana* literally means "message." It refers to the Dispensation of the *Buddha*, that is, the Buddhist religion; it also refers to the Teachings, the Doctrine (*Dhamma*). *Navanga-Buddha* (or *satthu-*)*sāsana* "the ninefold Dispensation of the *Buddha* (or the Master)" consists of: (1) the discourses (*sutta*); (2) mixed prose (*geyya*); (3) exegesis (*veyyākaraṇa*); (4) verses (*gāthā*); (5) solemn utterances (*udāna*); (6) sayings of the Blessed One (*itivuttaka*); (7) birth stories (*jataka*); (8) extraordinary things (*abbhutadhamma*); and (9) analysis (*vedalla*). This classification is often found in the *suttas*. According to the Commentaries, the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* are also included in the ninefold dvision. It is a classification based upon literary styles, and not upon given texts or books. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 193.

[284] That is to say, the other schools are empty of *Arahants*.

The *Buddha* replied:

> *"Whoever, Subhadda, being already committed to the other doctrines, desires the Lesser*[285] *and the Higher Ordination,*[286] *remains on probation for four months.*[287] *At the end of four months, the Bhikkhus approving, he is ordained and raised to the status of Bhikkhu. Nevertheless, on understanding, I will make individual exceptions."*

Then Subhadda said:

> *"If, Lord, those already committed to other doctrines, who desire the Lesser and the Higher Ordination in this Dispensation, remain on probation for four months, I, too, will remain on probation, and, after a lapse of that period, the Bhikkhus approving, let me be received into the Order and raised to the status of a Bhikkhu."*

Thereupon, the *Buddha* addressed Venerable Ānanda and said:

> *"Then, Ānanda, you may ordain Subhadda."*

To which, Ānanda replied:

> *"So be it, Lord."*

And Subhadda, the wandering ascetic, spoke to Venerable Ānanda as follows:

> *"It is a gain to you, O Venerable Ānanda! It is indeed a great gain to you, for you have been anointed by the anointment of discipleship in the presence of the Exalted One by Himself."*

Thereupon, Subhadda received the Lesser and the Higher Ordination in the presence of the *Buddha*. And, in no long time after his Higher Ordination, Venerable Subhadda, living alone, remote from men, strenuous, energetic, and resolute, realized, in this life itself, by his own intuitive knowledge, the consummation of that incomparable Life of Holiness, and lived abiding in that state for the sake of which sons of noble

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[285] The Lesser Ordination refers to ordination as a novice, which is done by donning a saffron-colored robe after having shaved one's hair and beard and taking the Three Refuges and Ten Precepts. The novice is called a *Sāmaṇera*. He has cut himself off from the world and its ways. Henceforth, even his parents are addressed as "lay disciples."

[286] The Higher Ordination is bestowed only after the completion of the twentieth year of life. He who receives the Higher Ordination is a full member of the Order and is called a *Bhikkhu*. He is bound to observe the *Pātimokkha* Precepts. If he commits any of the major offences, which involves "defeat," he is expelled from the order. If willing, however, he could remain as a *Sāmaṇera*.

[287] A probation is not demanded of the Buddhist aspirant to ordination.

families leave the householder's life for the homeless life. He perceived that rebirth was ended, completed was the Holy Life, that, after this life, there was none other. And so, Venerable Subhadda became one of the *Arahants*. He was the last personal convert of the *Buddha*.

The Last Words to Ānanda

Venerable Ānanda desired to know what should be done with the body of the *Tathāgata* after His death. The *Buddha* answered:

> *"Do not engage yourselves in honoring the remains of the Tathāgata. Be concerned about your own welfare.*[288] *Devote yourselves to your own welfare. Be heedful, be strenuous, and be intent on your own good. There are wise warriors, wise Brahmins, wise householders who are firm believers in the Tathāgata. They will do honor to the remains of the Tathāgata."*

When the *Buddha* finished speaking, Venerable Ānanda went aside and stood weeping at the thought:

> *"Alas, I am still a learner,*[289] *with work yet to do.*[290] *But my Master will soon pass away — He who was my sympathizer."*

The *Buddha*, noticing his absence, summoned Venerable Ānanda to His presence and exhorted him thus:

> *"Enough, O Ānanda! Do not grieve, do not weep. Have I not already told you that we have to separate and divide and sever ourselves from everything that is dear and pleasant to us.*
>
> *"O Ānanda, you have done much merit. Soon be freed from Defilements."*

The *Buddha* then paid a tribute to Venerable Ānanda, commenting on his salient virtues.

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[288] That is, Arahantship.

[289] *Sekha* "a noble learner"; a *sekha* — a disciple in higher training, that is, one who pursues the three kinds of training (*sikkhā*) — is one of those seven kinds of noble disciples who have reached one of the four supramundane paths or the three lower fruitions, while the one possessed of the fourth fruition (*Arahatta-phala*) is called "one beyond training" (*asekha*, literally, "no more learner"). A worldling (*puthujjana*) is called "neither a noble learner nor perfected in learning" (*n'eva-sekha-nāsekha*). A worldling is any lay person, monk, or nun who is still under the influence or control of all ten fetters (*saṁyojana*) that bind one to the round of rebirths (*saṁsāra*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 172 and 198.

[290] At this point, Venerable Ānanda was still a *Sotāpanna*.

After admonishing Venerable Ānanda in various ways, the *Buddha* directed him to enter Kusinārā and inform the Mallians of the impending death of the *Tathāgata*. The Mallians were duly informed and came weeping with their wives, young men, and young women to pay their last respects to the *Tathāgata*.

The Final Moments

Then, the Blessed One addressed Venerable Ānanda and said:

> *"It may be, Ānanda, that you will say thus: 'The Sublime Teaching is without the Teacher. There is no Teacher for us.' Nay, Ānanda, you should not think this way. Whatever Doctrine and Discipline have been taught and promulgated by me, Ānanda, they will be your Teacher when I am gone.*
>
> *"If willing, O Ānanda, the Sangha may abolish the lesser and minor rules after my death."*

Instead of using the imperative form, the *Buddha* has used the subjunctive in this behest. Had it been His wish that the lesser and minor rules should be abolished, He could have used the imperative. According to the Commentary, the *Buddha* foresaw that Venerable Kassapa, presiding over the First Council, would, with the consent of the *Sangha*, not abolish any rules — hence, His use of the subjunctive.

Inasmuch as the *Buddha* did not clearly state what these lesser and minor rules were and inasmuch as the *Arahants* could not come to a decision about them, they preferred not to alter any of the rules but to retain all of them intact.

Again, the *Buddha* addressed the disciples and said:

> *"If, O disciples, there be any doubt as to the Buddha, or the Doctrine, or the Order, or the Path, or the Method, question me now, and do not repent afterwards thinking: 'We were face to face with the Teacher, yet, we were not able to question the Exalted One in His presence'."*

When He spoke thus, the disciples were silent. For the second and third time, the *Buddha* addressed the disciples in the same way. And, for the second and third time, the disciples were silent. Then, the *Buddha* addressed the disciples and said:

> *"Perhaps it is out of respect for the Teacher that you do not question me. Let a friend, O disciples, speak out on behalf of another."*

Still, the disciples were silent.

Thereupon, Venerable Ānanda spoke to the *Buddha* as follows:

"Wonderful, Lord! Marvelous, Lord! Thus am I pleased with the company of disciples. There is not a single disciple who entertains a doubt or perplexity with regard to the Buddha, or the Doctrine, or the Order, or the Path, or the Method."

To which, the *Buddha* replied:

"You speak out of faith, Ānanda, regarding this matter. There is knowledge in the Tathāgata that, in this company of disciples, there is not a single disciple who entertains a doubt or perplexity with regard to the Buddha, the Doctrine, the Order, the Path, and the Method. Of these five hundred disciples, Ānanda, he who is the last is a Stream-Winner, not subject to fall but certain and destined for Enlightenment."[291]

Then, the *Buddha* addressed the disciples and gave His final exhortation:

"Indeed, Bhikkhus, this do I declare: Subject to change are all compound things. Strive on with diligence."

These were the last words spoken by the Blessed One.

The Passing Away

The *Buddha* attained to the First Absorption (*jhāna*). Emerging from it, He attained, in order, to the Second, Third, and Fourth Absorptions. Emerging from the Fourth Absorption, He attained to "The Realm of the Infinity of Space" (*ākāsānañcāyatana*). Emerging from it, He attained to "The Realm of the Infinity of Consciousness" (*viññāṇañcāyatana*). Emerging from it, He attained to "The Realm of Nothingness" (*ākiñcaññāyatana*). Emerging from it, He attained to "The Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-perception" (*n'eva-saññā-nāssaññāyatana*). Emerging from it, He attained to "The Cessation of Perceptions and Sensations" (*saññāvedayita nirodha*).

Venerable Ānanda, who had not yet developed the Divine Eye, addressed Venerable Anuruddha and said:

"O Venerable Anuruddha, the Exalted One has passed away."

To which, Venerable Anuruddha replied:

[291] The reference here is to Venerable Ānanda, who, encouraged by these words, attained Arahantship later, just before the opening session of the First Council held at Rājagaha three months after the *parinibbāna* of the *Buddha*.

"Nay, Brother Ānanda, the Exalted One has not passed away but has attained to the Cessation of Perceptions and Sensations."

Then, the *Buddha*, emerging from "The Cessation of Perceptions and Sensations," attained to "The Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-perception." Emerging from it, He attained to "The Realm of Nothingness." Emerging from it, He attained to "The Realm of the Infinity of Consciousness." Emerging from it, He attained to "The Realm of the Infinity of Space." Emerging from it, He attained to the Fourth Absorption. Emerging from it, He attained to the Third Absorption. Emerging from it, He attained to the Second Absorption. Emerging from it, He attained to the First Absorption. Emerging from it, He attained to the Second Absorption. Emerging from it, He attained to the Third Absorption. Emerging from it, He attained to the Fourth Absorption. Emerging from it, and immediately thereafter, the *Buddha* passed away.[292] ■

[292] The death of the *Buddha* occurred in 543 BCE on a *Vesak* full moon day.

PART TWO

Background

14

What is Buddhism?

"This doctrine is profound, difficult to see, difficult to understand, calm, sublime, not within the sphere of reasoning, subtle, to be understood by the wise."[293]

Is Buddhism a Philosophy?

The sublime *Dhamma* deals with truths and facts that can be tested and verified by personal experience and is not concerned with theories and speculations, which may be accepted as profound truths today and thrown overboard tomorrow. The *Buddha* did not expound revolutionary philosophical theories, nor did He attempt to create a new material science. In plain terms, He explained both what is within and what is without, in so far as it concerns emancipation from the ills of life, and He revealed the unique Path of Deliverance.

Furthermore, the *Buddha* did not teach all that He knew. On one occasion, while the *Buddha* was staying in a forest, He took a handful of leaves and said:

"O Bhikkhus, what I have taught you is comparable to the leaves in my hand, and what I have not taught you to the leaves in the forest. Why have I not taught them? Because they bring no benefit, no advancement in the Holy Life, and because they do not lead to dispassion, to fading, to ceasing, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to Enlightenment, to nibbāna. That is why I have not taught them. And what have I taught you? 'This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering; this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' This is what I have taught you. Why have I taught it? Because it brings benefit and advancement in the Holy Life, and because it leads to dispassion, to fading, to ceasing, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to Enlightenment, to nibbāna. So, Bhikkhus, let your task be this: This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering; this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering."[294]

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[293] *Majjhima Nikāya*.
[294] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

The *Buddha* taught what He determined to be absolutely essential for one's purification and was characteristically silent on questions that were irrelevant to His noble mission.

The *Buddha* expounded the truths of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and soullessness (*anattā*) more than 2,600 years ago.

The moral and philosophical teachings of the *Buddha* are to be studied, practiced, and, above all, realized by one's own intuitive wisdom. As such, the *Dhamma* is compared to a raft that enables one to cross the ocean of life.[295]

> *"Bhikkhus, I shall show you how the Dhamma is similar to a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding on to. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say."*
>
> *"Yes, Venerable Sir."*

The Blessed One then continued:

> *"Bhikkhus, suppose a man, in the course of a journey, saw a great expanse of water, whose near shore was dangerous and fearful and whose far shore was safe and free from fear, but there was no ferryboat or bridge going to the far shore. Then, he thought: 'There is this great expanse of water, whose near shore is dangerous and fearful and whose far shore is safe and free from fear, but there is no ferryboat or bridge going to the far shore. What if I collect grass, twigs, branches, and leaves and bind them together into a raft, and, supported by the raft and making an effort with my hands and feet, I got safely across to the far shore.' And then, the man collected grass, twigs, branches, and leaves and bound them together into a raft, and, supported by the raft and making an effort with his hands and feet, he got safely across to the far shore. Then, when he had gotten across and had arrived at the far shore, he might think thus: 'This raft has been very helpful to me, since, supported by it and making an effort with my hands and feet, I got safely across to the far shore. What if I were to hoist it on my head or load it on my shoulder and then go wherever I want.' Now, Bhikkhus, what do you think? By doing so, would that man be doing what should be done with that raft?"*
>
> *"No, Venerable Sir."*
>
> *"By doing what would that man be doing what should be done with that raft? Here, Bhikkhus, when that man got across and had arrived at the far shore, he might think thus: 'This raft has been very helpful to me, since, supported by it and making an effort with my hands and feet, I got safely across to the far shore. What if I were to haul it onto the dry land or set it adrift in the water and then go wherever I want.' Now, Bhikkhus, it is by so doing that that man would be doing what should be done with the raft. Just so have I shown you how the Dhamma is*

[295] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Tatiyavagga, Alagaddūpama Sutta, no. 22.

similar to a raft, being for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding on to.

"Bhikkhus, when you know the Dhamma to be similar to a raft, you should abandon even good states, how much more so bad states."

Thus, Buddhism cannot strictly be called a philosophy, because it is not merely "the love of, including the search after, wisdom."[296] Nor is Buddhism "a hypothetical interpretation of the unknown (as in metaphysics), or of the inexactly known (as in ethics or political philosophy)."[297]

If, on the other hand, philosophy means "an inquiry not so much after certain particular facts as after the fundamental character of this world in which we find ourselves, and of the kind of life which such a world it behooves us to live,"[298] then Buddhism may approximate a philosophy, but it is very much more comprehensive.

Philosophy deals mainly with knowledge and is not concerned with practice, whereas Buddhism lays special emphasis on practice and realization.

Is Buddhism a Religion?

Buddhism is not strictly a religion in the sense in which that word is commonly understood, for it is not "a system of faith and worship," owing any allegiance to a supernatural God.

Buddhism does not demand blind faith from its adherents. Hence, mere blind faith is dethroned and "confidence based on knowledge" is substituted for it. It is possible for a Buddhist to entertain occasional doubts until he attains the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*), when all doubts about the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha* are completely resolved. One becomes a genuine follower of the *Buddha* only after attaining this stage.[299]

The confidence of a follower of the *Buddha* is like that of a patient in respect of a noted physician or of a student regarding his teacher. Although a Buddhist seeks refuge in the *Buddha* as his incomparable guide and teacher who indicates the Path of Purification, he makes no servile surrender. A Buddhist does not think that he can gain purification by seeking refuge in the *Buddha* or by mere faith in Him. It is not within the power even of a *Buddha* to wash away the impurities of others. Strictly speaking, one can neither purify nor defile another. The *Buddha*, as Teacher, may be instrumental, but we ourselves are responsible for our own purification. In the *Dhammapada*, the *Buddha* says:[300]

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[296] *Webster's Dictionary*.
[297] Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster [1953]), p. 2.
[298] Webb, *History of Philosophy*, p. 2.
[299] An ordinary adherent may be genuine enough as a follower, but he is not a sharer by realization of the *Buddhadhamma*.
[300] *Dhammapada*, XII, The Self, verse 165.

> *"By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil not done; by oneself is one purified. Everyone has the choice to be pure or impure. No one can purify another."*[301]

A Buddhist is not a slave to a book or to any individual. Nor does he sacrifice his freedom of thought by becoming a follower of the *Buddha*. He is at full liberty to exercise his own freewill and develop his knowledge even to the extent of attaining Buddhahood himself, for all are potential *Buddhas*. Naturally, Buddhists cite the *Buddha* as their authority, but the *Buddha* Himself discarded all authority.

Immediate realization is the sole criterion of truth in Buddhism. Its keynote is rational understanding (*sammā diṭṭhi*). The *Buddha* advises those who seek truth not to accept anything merely on the authority of another but to exercise their own reasoning and judge for themselves whether something is right or wrong.

On one occasion, the citizens of Kesaputta, known as Kālāmas, approached the *Buddha* and said that many ascetics and Brahmins who came to preach to them would exalt their own doctrines and denounce those of others. The Kālāmas were at a loss as to how to judge which of those doctrines were right and which wrong.

> *"Yes, O Kālāmas, it is right for you to doubt, it is right for you to waver. In a doubtful matter, uncertainty has arisen…"*

remarked the *Buddha* and gave them the following advice, which applies with equal force to modern rationalists as it did to the skeptical Brahmins of yore:

> *"Come, O Kālāmas: Do not accept anything on mere hearsay [that is, thinking that thus have we heard it from ancient times].*[302] *Do not accept anything by mere tradition [that is, thinking that thus has it been handed down through many generations]. Do not accept anything on account of rumors [that is, by believing what others say without any investigation]. Do not accept anything just because it agrees with your scriptures. Do not accept anything by mere supposition. Do not accept anything by mere inference. Do not accept anything by merely considering appearances. Do not accept anything merely because it agrees with your preconceived ideas. Do not accept anything merely because it seems acceptable [that is, should be accepted]. Do not accept anything merely out of respect for the teacher [and that, therefore, it is proper to accept his word].*
>
> *"But, when you know for yourselves — these things are not moral, these things are blameworthy, these things are condemned by the wise, these things, when performed and undertaken, lead to ruin and sorrow, then, indeed, it is proper to reject them.*

[301] One can neither purify nor defile another.

[302] The bracketed explanatory parts are in accordance of the interpretations found in the Commentary and Sub-commentary.

> *"When you know for yourselves — these things are moral, these things are blameless, these things are praised by the wise, these things, when performed and undertaken, lead to well-being and happiness, then, indeed, do not reject them."*[303]

These wise sayings of the *Buddha*, uttered some 2,600 years ago, still retain their full force and freshness in the present times.

With a homely illustration, *Jñānasāsara-samucaya* repeats the same advice in different words:

> *"As the wise test gold by burning, cutting, and rubbing it [on a piece of touchstone], so are you to accept my words [only] after examining them and not merely out of regard for me."*

The *Buddha* exhorted His disciples to seek the truth and not to heed mere persuasion, even by a superior authority.

Now, even though it is to be admitted that there is no blind faith in Buddhism, one might question whether there is worshiping of *Buddha* images and similar idolatry among Buddhists. Buddhists do not worship an image expecting worldly or spiritual favors, but they do pay their respect to what the image represents. A Buddhist goes before an image and offers flowers and incense not to the image but to the *Buddha*. He does so as a sign of gratitude, reflecting on the virtues of the *Buddha* and pondering on the transiency of the flowers. An understanding Buddhist purposely makes himself feel that he is in the noble presence of the *Buddha* and, thereby, gains inspiration to emulate His example.

Then again, Buddhists do not worship the *bodhi*-tree but consider it a symbol of Enlightenment and, therefore, worthy of reverence.

Though such external forms of reverence are prevalent among Buddhists, the *Buddha* is not conceived of nor worshipped as a God.

These external objects of reverence are not absolutely necessary, but they are useful, and they help one to concentrate one's attention. Anyone could dispense with them and, instead, easily focus attention on the *Buddha* and, thus, visualize Him.

For our own good, and out of gratitude, we pay such reverence. However, what the *Buddha* expects from His followers is not obedience but actual observance of His Teachings.

Just before He passed away, many disciples came to pay their respects to Him. One *Bhikkhu*, however, remained in His cell absorbed in meditation. This matter was reported to the *Buddha*, who summoned the *Bhikkhu* before Him and, on inquiring the reason for his absence, was told:

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[303] *Anguttara Nikāya*.

> *"Lord, I knew that Your Reverence would pass away three months from now, and I thought that the best way to honor the Teacher was by attaining Arahantship before Your Reverence passed away."*

The *Buddha* extolled the praiseworthy conduct of that loyal and dutiful *Bhikkhu*, saying:

> *"Excellent, excellent! He who loves me should emulate this Bhikkhu. He honors me best who practices my Teaching best."*

On another occasion, the *Buddha* remarked:

> *"He who sees the Dhamma sees me."*[304]

Furthermore, it must be mentioned that there are no petitionary or intercessory prayers in Buddhism. However much one may pray to the *Buddha*, one cannot be saved by such means. The *Buddha* does not and cannot grant worldly favors to those who pray to Him. A Buddhist should not pray to be saved but should rely on his own efforts and should strive with diligence to win his freedom and gain purity. Advising His disciples not to depend on others but to depend on themselves and be self-reliant, the *Buddha* said:

> *"All the effort must be made by you; the Tathāgatas can only show the way. Those who enter this path and practice meditation are freed from the bond of Māra."*[305] [306]

The *Buddha* not only speaks of the futility of prayers but also disparages a slave mentality. Instead of prayers, the *Buddha* emphasizes the importance of meditation, which promotes self-discipline, self-control, self-purification, and self-enlightenment. It serves as a tonic both for the mind and the heart. Meditation is the essence of Buddhism.

In Buddhism, there is not, as there is in most other religions, an Almighty God to be obeyed and feared. Buddhism denies the existence of a supernatural power, conceived as an Almighty Being or a causeless force. There are no divine revelations nor divine messengers or prophets. A Buddhist is, consequently, not subservient to any higher supernatural power that controls his destinies and that arbitrarily rewards and punishes. Since Buddhists do not believe in revelations of a Divine Being, Buddhism does not claim a monopoly on truth and does not persecute those who belong to other religions. With His characteristic tolerance, the *Buddha* advised His disciples not to get angry, discontented, or displeased when others spoke ill of Him, or of His Teachings, or of His Holy Order. "If you do so," the *Buddha* said, "you will not only bring yourselves into

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[304] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

[305] Those who enter the path taught by the *Tathāgatas* and who practice the two kinds of meditation (calm abiding [*samatha*] and insight meditation [*vipassanā*]), are released from the bond of *Māra* known as "the whirl of the three planes of existence."

[306] *Dhammapada*, XX, The Path, verse 276.

danger of spiritual loss, but you will not be able to judge whether what they say is correct or incorrect" — a most enlightened sentiment. That does not mean, however, that we have to accept unjustified criticism, insults, abuse, threats, or anger. On one occasion, when reviled by a critic, the *Buddha* calmly refused to accept the insults, pointing out that the insults belonged instead to the one making them.

Buddhism expounds no dogmas that one must believe without questioning, no creeds that one must accept on blind faith without reasoning, no superstitious rites and ceremonies that one must observe in order to gain entry into the fold, and no meaningless sacrifices and penances that one must perform for one's purification.

Buddhism cannot, therefore, be strictly called a religion, because it is neither a system of faith and worship, nor "the outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a God or Gods having power over their own destiny to whom obedience, service, and honor are due."[307]

However, if by religion is meant "a teaching which takes a view of life that is more than just superficial, a teaching which looks into life and not merely at it, a teaching which furnishes men with a guide to conduct that is in accord with this in-look, a teaching which enables those who give it heed to face life with fortitude and death with serenity,"[308] or a system of deliverance from the ills of life, then Buddhism is a religion of religions.

Is Buddhism an Ethical System?

Buddhism contains an excellent moral code, including one for members of the Order and another for lay followers, but it is more than an ordinary moral teaching.

Morality (*sīla*) is only the preliminary stage and is a means to an end, but it is not an end in itself. Though absolutely essential, it alone does not lead to one's Deliverance or perfect purity. It is only the first stage on the Path of Purity (*visuddhimagga*). Beyond morality is wisdom (*paññā*). Morality is the base of Buddhism, and wisdom is its apex.

Morality in Buddhism is not founded on divine revelation, nor is it the ingenious invention of an exceptional mind, but it is a rational and practical code based on verifiable facts and individual experience.

According to Buddhism, there are deeds that are ethically good, deeds that are ethically bad, deeds that are neither good nor bad, and deeds that tend to the cessation of all deeds. Good deeds are essential for one's emancipation, but once the ultimate goal of the Holy Life has been attained, one transcends both good and bad.

Those deeds that are associated with attachment (*lobha*), ill will (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) are evil. Those deeds that are associated with non-attachment (*alobha*), goodwill (*adosa*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are good.

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[307] *Webster's Dictionary*.

[308] Former Bhikkhu Silācāra, *Ceylon Daily News*, *Vesak* Number, May 1939.

The deeds of an *Arahant*, a Stainless One, possess no ethical value, inasmuch as he has gone beyond good and evil. This does not mean that he is passive. He is active, but his activity is selfless and is directed to help others tread the path that he has trodden himself. His deeds, ordinarily accepted as good, lack creative power as regards himself. Unlike the actions of a worldling, his actions do not react on himself as a karmic effect.

His actions are called *kiriya* ("functional") in Pāḷi. The purest gold cannot be further purified.

The mental states of the four types of supramundane Path consciousness, namely, *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Winner), *Sakadāgāmī* (Once-Returner), *Anāgāmī* (Non-Returner), and *Arahant* (Worthy One), though wholesome (*kusala*), do not tend to accumulate fresh *kamma*, but, on the contrary, tend to the gradual cessation of the individual flux of becoming, and, therewith, to the gradual cessation of good and evil deeds. In these types of supramundane consciousness, the wisdom factor (*paññā*), which tends to destroy the roots of *kamma*, is predominant; while in the mundane types of consciousness, volition (*cetanā*), which produces karmic activities, is predominant.

What are the criteria of morality according to Buddhism? The answer is to be found in the admonition given by the *Buddha* to the young Sāmaṇera Rāhula:

> *"If there is a deed, Rāhula, you wish to do, reflect thus: Is this deed conducive to my harm, or to others' harm, or to that of both? Then, this is a bad deed, entailing suffering. Such a deed you must resist.*
>
> *"If there is a deed you wish to do, reflect thus: Is this deed conducive neither to my harm, nor to others' harm, nor to that of both? Then, this is a good deed, entailing happiness. Such a deed you must do again and again."*

In assessing morality, a Buddhist takes into consideration the interests both of himself and others — animals not excluded.

In the Karanīya Mettā Sutta,[309] the *Buddha* exhorts:

6.

Na paro paraṁ nikubbetha	Let no one deceive another
nātimaññetha katthacinaṁ kañci	Nor despise anyone anywhere.
Byārosanā paṭighasaññā	Neither in anger nor ill will
nāññaṁ aññassa dukkhaṁ iccheyya.	Should anyone wish harm to another.

7.

Mātā yathā niyaṁ puttaṁ	As a mother would risk her own life
āyusā ekaputtaṁ anurakkhe	To protect her only child,
evampi sabbabhūtesu	Even so towards all living beings
Mānasaṁ bhāvaye aparimānaṁ	One should cultivate a boundless heart.

[309] *Sutta Nipāta*.

8.

Mettañ ca sabba-lokasmiṁ	One should cultivate for all the world
mānassaṁ bhāvaye aparimānaṁ	A heart of boundless loving-kindness,
Uddhaṁ adho ca tiriyañ ca	Above, below, and across,
Asambādhaṁ averaṁ asapattaṁ.	Unobstructed, without hate or enmity.

The *Dhammapada* states:[310]

> *"Everyone fears punishment; everyone fears death, just as you do. Therefore, do not kill or cause to kill.*
>
> *"Everyone fears punishment; everyone loves life, just as you do. Therefore, do not kill or cause to kill.*
>
> *"If, hoping to be happy, you strike at others who are also seeking happiness, you will be happy neither here nor hereafter.*
>
> *"If, hoping to be happy, you do not strike at others who are also seeking happiness, you will be happy here and hereafter."*

To understand the exceptionally high standard of morality that the *Buddha* expects of His followers, one must carefully read the *Dhammapada*, Sigālovāda Sutta,[311] Vyāgghapajja Sutta, Mangala Sutta,[312] Mettā Sutta,[313] Parābhava Sutta,[314] Vasala Sutta,[315] and Dhammika Sutta,[316] among others.

As a moral teaching, Buddhism excels over all other ethical systems, but morality is only the beginning and not the end in Buddhism.

What Buddhism Is

1. Buddhism is neither a metaphysical path nor a ritualistic path.
2. It is neither skeptical nor dogmatic.
3. It is neither eternalism nor nihilism.
4. It is neither self-mortification nor self-indulgence.
5. It is neither pessimism nor optimism, but realism.
6. It is neither absolutely this-worldly nor other-worldly.
7. It is not extraverted but introverted (introspective).
8. It is not theocentric but homocentric (anthropocentric).
9. It is a unique Path of Enlightenment.

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[310] *Dhammapada*, X, Punishment, verses 129—132.
[311] *Dīgha Nikāya*.
[312] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Sutta Nipāta*.
[313] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Sutta Nipāta*.
[314] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Sutta Nipāta*.
[315] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Sutta Nipāta*.
[316] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Sutta Nipāta*.

The original Pāḷi term for Buddhism is *Dhamma*, which means, literally, "that which upholds or sustains (one who acts in conformity with its principles and prevents one from falling into woeful states)." There is no proper English equivalent that exactly conveys the meaning of the Pāḷi term.

The *Dhamma* is that which really is. It is a Means of Deliverance from suffering and Deliverance itself. Whether *Buddhas* arise or not, the *Dhamma* exists from beginningless time and throughout all eternity. It is a *Buddha* who realizes this *Dhamma*, which ever lies hidden from the ignorant eyes of mankind, till He, an Enlightened One, comes and compassionately reveals it to the world.

> *"Whether the Tathāgatas appear or not, O Bhikkhus, it remains a fact, an established principle, a natural law that all conditioned things are transient (anicca), sorrowful (dukkha), and that everything is soulless (anattā). This fact the Tathāgata realizes, understands, and, when He has realized and understood it, announces, teaches, proclaims, establishes, discloses, analyzes, and makes it clear that all conditioned things are transient, sorrowful, and that everything is soulless."*[317]

In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the *Buddha* says:

> *"Bhikkhus, both in the past and now, what I teach is suffering and the cessation of suffering."*[318]

This is the Doctrine of Reality.

The *Udāna* states:

> *"Just as, O Bhikkhus, the mighty ocean is of one flavor, the flavor of salt, even so, O Bhikkhus, this Dhamma is of one flavor — the flavor of Deliverance (Vimutti)."*

This is the Means of Deliverance.

This sublime *Dhamma* is not something apart from oneself. It is purely dependent on oneself and is to be realized by oneself. As such, the *Buddha* exhorts:

> *"Be an island unto yourself, with yourself as a refuge. Abide with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge. Do not seek for external refuge."*[319] ■

[317] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part I.
[318] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Tatiyavagga, Alagaddūpama Sutta, no. 22.
[319] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, no. 16.

15

Some Salient Characteristics Of Buddhism

"Well expounded is the Dhamma by the Exalted One, to be self-realized, with immediate fruit, inviting investigation, leading on to nibbāna, to be comprehended by the wise, each for himself."[320]

Foundations of Buddhism

The four Noble Truths (*ariya-sacca*), which the *Buddha* Himself discovered and revealed to the world, are the chief characteristics and the unshakable foundations of Buddhism.

The four Noble Truths are:

1. The first Noble Truth teaches that all forms of existence are unsatisfactory and subject to suffering (*dukkha*);
2. The second Noble Truth teaches that all suffering, and all rebirth, are produced by craving (*taṇhā*);
3. The third Noble Truth teaches that the cessation (*nirodha*) of craving directly results in the cessation of suffering and rebirth (that is, *nibbāna*);
4. The fourth Noble Truth indicates the means by which this cessation is achieved (that is, the Noble Eightfold Path).

The first three Noble Truths represent the philosophy of Buddhism, while the fourth represents the ethics of Buddhism, in accordance with that philosophy.

All these four Truths, which comprise the *Dhamma* of the *Buddha*, are dependent on this body itself. They are incontrovertible facts wholly associated with man and other beings.

Whether *Buddhas* arise or not, these Truths exist. It is the *Buddhas* who reveal them to the world.

Buddhism rests on the pivot of suffering. Although Buddhism emphasizes the existence of suffering, yet, it does not follow that Buddhism is pessimistic. On the

[320] *Majjhima Nikāya*.

contrary, it is neither totally pessimistic nor totally optimistic, but realistic. One would be justified in calling the *Buddha* a pessimist if He had merely emphasized the truth of suffering without suggesting a means to end suffering and gain eternal happiness. The *Buddha* perceived the universality of suffering and prescribed a remedy for this universal sickness of humanity. The highest conceivable happiness, according to the *Buddha*, is *nibbāna*, which is the total extinction of suffering.

Happiness

The *Buddha* does not expect His followers to be constantly brooding on the ills of life and so make their lives unhappy.

Joy (*pīti*) has to be cultivated by every Buddhist as one of the essentials, or prerequisites, of Enlightenment. It has often been noted that Buddhists are among the happiest people in the entire world. They have no inferiority complex that they are wretched sinners. In fact, the concept of "sin" does not even exist in Buddhism. The members of the Noble Order, who lead the Holy Life[321] in the fullest possible manner, are perhaps the happiest of all — happily, they live in the eternal present, with no worries about either the past or the future.

> *"Ah, happily do we live, indeed, not hating anyone among those who hate. Among those who hate, we live without hating anyone.*
>
> *"Ah, happily do we live, indeed, never falling sick among those who are sick. We live without disease*[322] *even among those who are ill.*[323]
>
> *"Ah, happily do we live, indeed, never yearning for sense pleasures among those who yearn for them. We live without yearning even among those who yearn.*
>
> *"Ah, happily do we live, indeed, free from impurities.*[324] *We live in happiness, like the gods of the Radiant Realm."*[325]

An interesting interpretation of Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) in terms of happiness is found in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, where the *Buddha* says:

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[321] *Brahmacariya*, "pure (chaste) or holy life," is a term applied to the life of a Buddhist monk or a nun. It also applies to a lay disciple who observes the eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*), which includes full abstinence from sexual relations. The highest aim and purpose of *brahmacariya* is, according to the *Majjhima Nikāya*, Mahāsāropama Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood), no. 29, the "unshakable deliverance of mind" (*akuppā ceto-vimutti*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 43.

[322] Free from moral defilements.

[323] Those who are afflicted with moral defilements.

[324] *Kiñcana*, literally, "something evil that sticks to one's personality," is a name for the three unwholesome roots (*mūla*): (1) greed (*lobha*); (2) hatred (*dosa*); and (3) delusion (*moha*).

[325] *Dhammapada*, XV, Happiness, verses 197—200.

"Suffering leads to Confidence (saddhā); Confidence to Rapture (pāmojja); Rapture to Joy (pīti); Joy to Tranquility (passaddhi); Tranquility to Happiness (sukha); Happiness to Concentration (samādhi); Concentration to the Knowledge and Vision of things as they truly are (yathābhūta-ñāṇadassana); the Knowledge and Vision of things as they truly are to Repulsion (nibbidā); Repulsion to Non-attachment (virāga); Non-attachment to Deliverance (vimutti); Deliverance to the Extinction of Passions (khaye-ñāṇa), that is, to Arahantship."[326]

This important passage clearly indicates how suffering can lead to happiness and ultimately to Sainthood.

Rationality and Practicality of Buddhism

No blind faith is necessary to understand the four Noble Truths. The first two Truths, which are mundane (*lokiya*), can be experienced by worldlings (*puthujjana*) themselves. The second two Truths, which are supramundane (*lokuttara*), can be experienced by attaining Sainthood.

It is on the bedrock of these facts, which can be verified by personal experience and tested by anybody, that the *Buddhadhamma* is built and not on the fear of the unknown. Buddhism is, therefore, rational and intensely practical.

In the *Dhamma*, there is nothing that is impractical and irrational. The *Buddha* practiced what He taught; He taught what He practiced. What He most emphasizes in His teaching is practice, for creeds alone cannot purify a person. As stated in the *Dhammapada*:[327]

"Though one may be well-versed in the scriptures and be able to recite them from beginning to end, if one does not put into practice their teachings, then, such a heedless one may be likened to a cowherd who counts someone else's cattle — that one will gain none of the benefits of living the Holy Life.

"Though one may know little of the scriptures, if one nonetheless puts into practice their teachings, forsaking lust, hatred, and false views, truly knowing, with a disciplined mind, clinging to nothing either in this life or the next, then, that one will surely gain the benefits of living the Holy Life."

A rational and practical system cannot contain any mysterious or esoteric doctrine. In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, the *Buddha* emphatically declares:[328]

[326] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, vol. II.
[327] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verses 19—20.
[328] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, no. 16.

> *"I have taught the Truth without making any distinction between esoteric and exoteric doctrine; for, in respect of the Truth, the Tathāgata has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher who keeps something back."*

Anantaraṁ and *abāhiraṁ* are the words used by the *Buddha*. If the *Buddha* had thought: "This much of my doctrine I will not teach others," or "Only this much of my doctrine will I teach others," He would have fallen into the category of teachers who keep a closed fist, that is, who hold something back. If the *Buddha* had thought: "To those persons [only], I will teach," or "To these persons, I will not teach," He would have created an inner circle and an outer circle. The *Buddha* makes no such distinction.

With respect to secret doctrines, the *Buddha* says:[329]

> *"O Disciples, there are three to whom secrecy belongs and not openness. Who are they? Secrecy belongs to women, not openness; secrecy belongs to priestly wisdom, not openness; secrecy belongs to false doctrine, not openness. The doctrines and rules proclaimed by the perfect Buddha shine before all the world and not in secret."*

Moreover, the *Buddha* did not express His views about the problems that perplex mankind. He was characteristically silent on these controversial subjects, because they were irrelevant to His noble mission and were not essential to one's Emancipation.

On one occasion, a certain *Bhikkhu* named Mālunkyāputta approached the *Buddha* and impatiently demanded an immediate answer to some speculative problems and threatened to leave the Order if they were not resolved:

> *"Lord, while I was alone in meditation, the following thought arose in my mind: 'These theories have not been elucidated, have been set aside, and have been rejected by the Exalted One ... If He does not explain these to me, then, I will abandon the Holy Life and return to the life of a lay person.' If the Blessed One knows whether the world is eternal or not eternal; whether the world is finite or infinite; whether the life-principle is the same as the body or whether the life-principle is one thing and the body is another; whether the Tathāgata exists or does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death — in that case, let the Blessed One explain these to me*
>
> *"If the Blessed One does not know whether the world is eternal or not eternal; whether the world is finite or infinite; whether the life-principle is the same as the body or whether the life-principle is one thing and the body is another; whether the Tathāgata exists or does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death — in that case, certainly, for one who*

[329] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part I.

does not know and lacks the insight, the only proper thing is to say: 'I do not know, I do not have the insight'."

The *Buddha* advised him not to waste his time and energy on such speculation, which was detrimental to moral progress:

"Now then, Mālunkyāputta, did I ever say to you: 'Come, Mālunkyāputta, lead the Holy Life under me, and I will declare to you whether the world is eternal or not eternal; whether the world is finite or infinite; whether the life-principle is the same as the body or the life-principle is one thing and the body is another; whether the Tathāgata exists or does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death?'"

"No, Venerable Sir."

"Did you ever say to me: 'I will lead the Holy Life under the Blessed One if the Blessed One will declare to me whether this world is eternal or not eternal ... or whether, after death, the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist?'"

"No, Venerable Sir."

"That being so, misguided man, who are you, and what are you abandoning?"

"If anyone should say thus: 'I will not lead the Holy Life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One declares to me whether this world is eternal or not eternal ... or whether, after death, the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,' that would still remain undeclared by the Tathāgata, and, meanwhile, that person would die.

"It is as if, Mālunkyāputta, a person were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison and his friends and companions, his kinsman and relatives brought a doctor to treat him and he should say to the doctor: 'I shall not allow this arrow to be extracted until I know the name and caste of the man who wounded me; ... until I know whether the man who wounded me was tall or short or of medium height; ... until I know whether the man who wounded me was dark or brown or golden-skinned; ... until I know whether the man who wounded me lives in such a village or town or city; ... until I know whether the bow that wounded me was a long bow or a crossbow; ... until I know whether the bowstring that wounded me was fiber or reed or sinew or hemp or bark; ... until I know whether the shaft that wounded me was wild or cultivated; ... until I know with what kind of feathers the shaft that wounded me was fitted — whether those of a vulture or a crow or a hawk or a peacock or a stork; ... until I know with what kind of sinew the shaft that wounded me was bound — whether that of an ox or a buffalo or a lion or a monkey; ... until I know what kind of arrow it was that wounded me — whether it was hoof-tipped or curved or barbed or calf-toothed or oleander.' That person would die before this would ever be known by him. In the same way, Mālunkyāputta, if anyone should say thus: 'I will not lead the Holy

Life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One declares to me whether this world is eternal or not eternal ... or whether, after death, the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,' that person would die before these questions had ever been elucidated by the Tathāgata."[330]

The solving of these metaphysical questions does not lead to Aversion (*nibbidā*), elimination of Delusion (*moha*), Enlightenment (*bodhi*), or *nibbāna*.

On another occasion, when some of His disciples sought information about these points, the *Buddha* silenced them by citing the parable of the elephant and the blind men.

An elephant was presented to some blind men, and they were asked to describe what it looked like. Those who touched different parts of the elephant's body expressed their own particular ideas about the elephant. They then argued among themselves, and the arguments naturally ended in a quarrel:[331]

At one time the Blessed One was living at Sāvatthī, and, at that time, a number of wandering ascetics and Brahmins of various sects had gone to Sāvatthī for alms. They had differing views, opinions, and notions, and they relied for support on their differing views. There were some ascetics and Brahmins who asserted and believed that "The world is eternal: only this is true, everything else is false," and some who asserted and believed each of the other nine views. They quarreled, brawled, wrangled, and wounded each other with verbal darts: "The Dhamma is like this; the Dhamma is like that!"

Then, a number of Bhikkhus, on their return from their alms round told the Blessed One about it. The Blessed One said:

"Bhikkhus, there once was a certain king in Sāvatthī. He told a certain man: 'Come, man, gather together all the men in Sāvatthī who have been born blind.' 'Yes, Sire,' he replied. 'Then show them an elephant.' He did so, saying: 'You men blind from birth, an elephant is like this,' and he showed the elephant's head to some and its ear to others and its tusk to others and its trunk to others and its body to others and its foot to others and its rump to others and its tail to others and the tuft at the end of its tail to others. Then, he went to the king and told him what he had done. Thereupon, the king went to the men blind from birth and asked them: 'Has an elephant been shown to you?' 'Yes, Sire.' 'Then describe what the elephant is like.' Now, those who had been shown the head said: 'Sire, the elephant is like a jar,' and those shown the ear said: 'It is like a winnowing basket,' and those shown the tusk said: 'It is like a post,' and those shown the trunk said: 'It is like a plow's pole,' and those shown the body said: 'It is like a granary,' and those shown the foot said: 'It is like the base of a column,' and those shown the rump said: 'It is like a mortar,' and those shown the tail said: 'It is like a pestle,' and those shown the tuft at the end of the tail said: 'It is like a

[330] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Bhikkhuvagga, Cūḷa Mālunkya Sutta, no. 63.
[331] *Udāna* 6:4.

broom.' They fought among themselves with their fists, crying: 'The elephant is like this; the elephant is like that!' 'The elephant is not like this; the elephant is not like that!' But the king was pleased. So, too, the wanderers of other sects are blind and eyeless. That is why they quarrel, brawl, wrangle, and wound each other with verbal darts: 'The Dhamma is like this; the Dhamma is not like that!' 'The Dhamma is not like that; the Dhamma is like this!'"

Useless speculations that do not tend to Emancipation and that merely gratify curiosity were dismissed by the *Buddha* with His characteristic silence.

Buddhism does not claim to provide an explanation for all of the ethical and philosophical problems that may be of interest to mankind. Neither does it deal with idle speculations and theories that do not tend to edification. Buddhism has a practical and specific purpose — the cessation (*nirodha*) of suffering (*dukkha*) —, and, with that goal in view, all irrelevant issues are totally set aside. Nevertheless, every encouragement is given to keen investigation into the real nature of life.

No coercions, persecutions, or fanaticisms play any part in Buddhism. To the unique credit of Buddhism, it must be said that, throughout its peaceful march of 2,600 years, no drop of blood has been shed in the name of the *Buddha*, no mighty monarch has wielded his powerful sword to propagate the *Dhamma*, and no conversion has been made either by force or by repulsive methods. In the name of the *Buddha*, no sacred place was made red with the blood of innocent victims, no sincere thinkers were burnt alive, and there was no merciless roasting of heretics. Yet, the *Buddha* was the first and the greatest missionary who lived on earth. Buddhism has spread, and is still spreading, rapidly throughout the world and is making peaceful penetration to all countries owing mainly to the intrinsic merit and unsurpassed beauty of its teachings and not at all with the aid of imperialism, militarism, or any other coercive or unethical proselytizing methods.[332]

Buddhism, which teaches nothing mysterious, does not speak of miracles. The *Buddha* no doubt possessed supernormal powers as a result of His mental cultivation, but He did not perform miracles. *Yamaka pāṭihāriya*, for instance, erroneously translated as "Twin Miracle," is a psychic phenomenon that only a *Buddha* can perform. In this particular case, by means of His psychic powers, He makes it appear as though fire and water are issuing from the pores of His body simultaneously.

Buddhism appeals more to the intellect than to the emotions. It is concerned more with the character of its followers than with their numerical strength.

On one occasion, Upāli the millionaire, a follower of Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, approached the *Buddha* and was so pleased with the *Buddha's* exposition of the *Dhamma* that he instantly expressed his desire to become of follower of the *Buddha*. But the

[332] The problem of unethical proselytizing methods by Christian missionaries in Śri Lanka is discussed in an editorial published in 2006 on LankaWeb by Harendra de Silva entitled "Christian Evangelism — Whither Decency". Not only does this editorial give an interesting perspective on how these methods are viewed by locals, it clearly points out that these aggressive methods have become a serious problem for society, and not only in Śri Lanka.

Buddha advised him to consider this very carefully before making a final decision, saying:

> *"Of a verity, O householder, make a thorough investigation. It is well for a distinguished man like you to make a thorough investigation."*

Upāli, who was overwhelmed with joy at this unexpected utterance of the *Buddha*, replied:

> *"Lord, if I had become a follower of another teacher, his followers would have taken me through the streets in a procession proclaiming that such and such a millionaire had renounced his former religion and had embraced theirs. But, Lord, you advise me to investigate further. I am even more pleased with this salutary advice of yours, and I repeat for the second time: 'I seek refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha'."*

Though Upāli became a Buddhist by conviction, the *Buddha*, quite in keeping with His boundless compassion and perfect tolerance, advised him to support his former religious teacher in accordance with his usual practice.

Exhorting all seekers of truth not to be influenced by external authorities or by mere persuasions, the *Buddha* even went to the extent of requesting His followers not to bow down submissively to a superior authority.

Buddhism is saturated with this spirit of free inquiry and complete tolerance. It is the teaching of an open mind and a sympathetic heart which, lighting and warming the whole universe with its twin rays of wisdom (*paññā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*), sheds its genial glow on every being struggling in the ocean of birth and death.

So compassionate and tolerant was the *Buddha* that He did not exercise His power to give commandments to His lay followers. Instead of commanding them with words like, "you should," "you should not" or "you must," "you must not," He said: "It behooves you to do this," "it behooves you to do that."

The ordinary precepts (*sikkhāpada*[333]) that Buddhists are expected to observe are not commandments but modes of discipline, which they take of their own accord.

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[333] *Sikkhāpada* means "moral rules, precepts." The five precepts (*pañca-sīla*), which are binding on all Buddhist lay practitioners, are: (1) abstaining from killing any living being; (2) from taking what is not freely given (stealing); (3) from sexual misconduct (adultery, rape, seduction); (4) from false speech; and (5) from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness. The ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*), which are binding on all Buddhist novices, monks, and nuns, are: (1) abstaining from killing any living being; (2) from taking what is not freely given (stealing); (3) from all forms of sexual activity; (4) from false speech; (5) from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness; (6) from eating after midday; (7) from dancing, singing, music, and shows; (8) from garlands, scents, cosmetics, adornments, etc.; (9) from high and luxurious beds and seats; and (10) from accepting gold and silver (money). The eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*), which are observed by many Buddhist lay practitioners on full and new moon days, as well as on the first and last quarter of the moon (collectively known as *uposatha* days), are: (1) abstaining from killing any living being; (2) from taking what is not freely given (stealing); (3) from all forms of sexual activity;

The *Buddha* extended this tolerance and sympathy to all men, all women, and all living beings without distinction.

Buddhism and Caste

It was the *Buddha* who, for the first time in the known history of mankind, attempted to abolish slavery and "invented the higher morality and the idea of the brotherhood of the entire human race and in striking terms condemned" the degrading caste system that was firmly rooted in Indian society. The *Buddha* declared:[334]

"Birth does not make one an outcast,
Birth does not make one a Brahmin.
It is one's deeds that make one an outcast,
It is one's deeds that make one a Brahmin."

The Vāseṭṭha Sutta[335] relates that two young Brahmins had a discussion with regard to what constitutes a Brahmin. One maintained that birth made one a Brahmin, while the other contended that conduct made a Brahmin. Since neither could convince the other, both of them agreed to refer the matter to the *Buddha*. Consequently, they approached the *Buddha* and presented their case before Him.

The *Buddha* began by reminding the questioners that, although in the case of plants, insects, quadrupeds, serpents, fishes, and birds, there are many species and marks by which they could be distinguished, yet, in the case of men, there are no such species or marks. Thereupon, He explained how men differentiated themselves according to their various occupations. In conclusion, the *Buddha* commented:

"Birth does not make a Brahmin or a non-Brahmin;
It is life and deeds that mold a true Brahmin.
Their lives alone mold farmers, tradesmen, merchants, and serfs;
Their lives alone mold robbers, soldiers, chaplains, and kings."

Another interesting dialogue concerning this problem of caste appears in the Madhura Sutta.[336] The King of Madhura makes the following report to Venerable Kaccāna:

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(4) from false speech; (5) from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness; (6) from eating after midday; (7) from dancing, singing, music, and shows and from garlands, scents, cosmetics, adornments, etc.; and (8) from high and luxurious beds and seats. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 199.

[334] *Sutta Nipāta*, Vasala Sutta.

[335] *Sutta Nipāta*, Vāseṭṭha Sutta.

[336] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Rājavagga, Madhura Sutta, no. 84.

"The Brahmins say thus, Kaccāna: 'The Brahmins are the most distinguished of the four castes into which the people are classified; every other caste is inferior. The Brahmins alone are accounted pure, not those who are not Brahmins. The Brahmins are the legitimate sons of Brahmā, born from his mouth, specially made by him, heirs of Brahmā.' What do you, Sir, say to this?"

Venerable Kaccāna replied that it was an empty assertion and pointed out how a wealthy person could employ as his servant a member of any class or caste and how a vicious person could be born in a woeful state and a virtuous person in a blissful state despite their particular castes, adding that a criminal, irrespective of his caste, would be punished for his crime. He emphasized the fact that all joining the Order receive equal honor and reverence without any discrimination.

According to Buddhism, caste or color does not preclude one from becoming an adherent of the *Buddha* or from entering the noble Order of the *Sangha*, where all are treated as *Ariyas*. Fishermen, scavengers, courtesans, together with warriors and Brahmins were freely admitted into the Order and were also given positions of authority.

Upāli, the barber, was made, in preference to all others, chief disciple in matters pertaining to the *Vinaya* discipline. Sunīta, who was honored by Kings and nobles as an *Arahant*, was a timid scavenger. The philosophic Sāti was the son of a fisherman. The courtesan Ambapālī joined the Order and attained Arahantship. Rajjumālā, who was converted by the *Buddha* as she was about to commit suicide, was a slave girl. So was Punnā, whose invitation to spend a rainy season was accepted by the *Buddha* in preference to that of the millionaire Anāthapiṇḍika, her own master. Subhā was the daughter of a smith. Cāpā was the daughter of a deer-stalker. Such examples could be multiplied from the scriptures to show that the portals of Buddhism were wide open to all without any distinction.

The *Buddha* provided equal opportunities for all and raised, rather than lowered, the status of people. Buddhism appeals to the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the old and the young, the weak and the strong.

Buddhism and Women

It was also the *Buddha* who raised the status of women and who brought them to a realization of their importance to society.

Before the advent of the *Buddha*, women in India were not held in high esteem. One Indian writer, Hemacandra, looked down upon women as "the torch lighting the way to hell."

The *Buddha* did not denigrate women. He saw the innate good of both men and women and assigned to them their due places in His Teaching. Gender is not a barrier for purification or service.

Sometimes, the Pāḷi term used to connote women is *mātugāmā*, which means "mother-folk." As a mother, a woman holds an honorable place in Buddhism. A mother

is regarded with reverence, and a wife is regarded as the "best friend" (*paramā sakhā*) of the husband.

Although, at first, the *Buddha* refused, on entirely reasonable grounds, to admit women into the Order, He later yielded to the entreaties of Venerable Ānanda and His stepmother, Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī, and founded the Order of *Bhikkhunīs* (Nuns). It was the *Buddha* who thus founded the first religious order for women with specific rules and regulations.

Just as the *Arahants* Sāriputta and Moggallāna were made the two chief disciples in the Order of *Bhikkhus*, the oldest democratically constituted celibate Order, even so, the *Arahants* Khemā and Uppalavaṇṇā were made the two chief female disciples in the Order of *Bhikkhunīs*. Many other female disciples, too, were named by the *Buddha* Himself as among the most distinguished and pious followers. Among the Vajjians, too, freedom to women was regarded as one of the causes that led to their prosperity. Before the advent of the *Buddha*, women in ancient India did not enjoy sufficient freedom and were deprived of an opportunity to exhibit their innate spiritual capabilities and their mental gifts. In ancient India, as is still the case today, the birth of a daughter in a family was considered to be an unwelcome and cumbersome addition.

On one occasion, while the *Buddha* was conversing with King Pasenadi of Kosala, a messenger came and informed the King that a daughter had been born unto him. Hearing it, the King was displeased. But the *Buddha* comforted him and softened his heart, saying:

> *"Some women are, indeed, better [than men]. Bring her up, O Lord of men.*
>
> *"There are women who are wise and virtuous, who regard their mother-in-law as a goddess, and who are chaste.*
>
> *"A valiant son, a lord of realms, who would rule a kingdom, may be born to such a noble wife."*[337]

To women, who were placed under various disabilities before the appearance of the *Buddha*, the establishment of the Order of *Bhikkhunīs* was certainly a blessing. In this Order, queens, princesses, daughters of noble families, widows, bereaved mothers, servants and slaves, courtesans, all, despite their caste or rank, met on an equal footing, enjoyed perfect consolation and peace, and breathed that free atmosphere that was denied to those confined to traditional roles in Indian society. Many, who otherwise would have fallen into oblivion, distinguished themselves in various ways and gained their emancipation by seeking refuge in the Order.

Khemā, the chief female disciple, was the beautiful consort of King Bimbisāra. She was, at first, reluctant to see the *Buddha*, inasmuch as she had heard that the *Buddha* referred to external beauty in disparaging terms. One day, she paid a casual visit to the monastery merely to enjoy the scenery of the place. Gradually, she was attracted to the

[337] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Part I.

hall where the *Buddha* was teaching. The *Buddha*, who read her thoughts, created, by means of His psychic powers, the image of a beautiful young maiden standing aside fanning Him. Khemā was admiring her beauty. The *Buddha* then made this created image change from youth to middle age and then to old age, till it finally fell on the ground with broken teeth, gray hair, and wrinkled skin. Then only did Khemā realize the vanity of external beauty and the fleeting nature of life. She thought to herself:

> *"Has such a body come to be wrecked like that? Then, so will my body become as well."*

The *Buddha* read her thoughts and said:

> *"They who are slaves to lust drift down the stream, like a spider gliding down the web he himself made. But the released, who have snapped all their bonds in two, with thoughts directed elsewhere, forsake the world and delight, all, in sensuality put far away."*[338]

Paṭācārā, who lost her two children, husband, parents, and brother under very tragic circumstances, was attracted to the *Buddha's* presence by His willpower. Hearing the *Buddha's* soothing words, she attained the first stage of Sainthood (*Sotāpanna*) and entered the Order. One day, as she was washing her feet, she noticed how first the water trickled a little way and subsided, the second time, it flowed a little further and subsided, and the third time, it flowed still further and subsided. "Even so do mortals die," she pondered, "either in childhood, or middle age, or when old." The *Buddha* read her thoughts and, projecting His image before her, taught her the *Dhamma*. She attained Arahantship and later became a source of consolation to many a bereaved mother.

Dhammadinnā and Bhaddā Kāpilānī were two *Bhikkhunīs* who were honored exponents of the *Dhamma*.

In answer to Māra, the Evil One, it was Bhikkhunī Somā who remarked:

> *"What should woman-nature count in her who, with mind well-set and knowledge advancing, has right to the Dhamma? To one who entertains doubt with the question: 'Am I a woman in these matters, or am I a man, or what then am I?,' the Evil One is fit to talk."*

Among the laity, too, there were many women who were distinguished for their piety, generosity, devotion, learning, and loving-kindness. The chief benefactress of the Order, Visākhā, stands foremost among them all.[339]

Suppiyā was a very devout woman who, being unable to procure some meat from the market, cut a piece of flesh from her thigh to prepare a soup for a sick *Bhikkhu*.

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[338] *Therīgāthā*.

[339] See Chapter 9.

Nakulamātā was a faithful wife who, by reciting her virtues, rescued her husband from the jaws of death.

Sāmāvatī was a pious and lovable queen who, without any ill will, radiated loving-kindness towards her rival even when she was burnt to death through her rival's evil machinations.

Queen Mallikā, on many occasions, counseled her husband, King Pasenadi of Kosala.

A maid-servant, Khujjuttārā, secured many converts by teaching the *Dhamma*.

Punabbasumātā was so intent on hearing the *Dhamma* that she calmed her crying child by saying:

> *"Be silent, O little Uttarā! Be still, Punabbasu, that I may hear the Dhamma taught by the Master, by the Most Wise One. My own child is dear to me, and my husband is dear as well; dearer still than these to me is this Doctrine to explore the Path."*[340]

A contemplative mother, when questioned why she did not weep at the loss of her only child, replied:

> *"Uncalled, he came here; unbidden, soon to go. Even as he came, he went. What cause is there for woe?"*

Sumanā and Subhaddā were two sisters of exemplary character who had complete faith in the *Buddha*.

These few examples will suffice to illustrate the great part played by women in the life of the *Buddha*.

Buddhism and Harmlessness

The boundless kindness of the *Buddha* was directed not only to all human beings but to animals as well. It was the *Buddha* who banned the sacrifice of animals and admonished His followers to extend unlimited, universal love and goodwill (*mettā*) to all living beings, even the tiniest creature that crawls at one's feet. No one, He taught, has the right to destroy the life of another, inasmuch as life is precious to all.

A *Bhikkhu* is expected to exercise this loving-kindness to such an extent that he is forbidden by the *Vinaya* rules even to dig or cause to dig the ground. He cannot even drink water without filtering it.

Asoka, the great Buddhist King, wrote edicts on rocks and columns, saying: "The living must not be nourished with the living. Even chaff with insects must not be burnt."

[340] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Part I.

A genuine follower of the *Buddha* must practice this loving-kindness towards every living being and must identify himself with all, making no distinctions whatever. It is this loving-kindness, one of the most salient characteristics of Buddhism, that attempts to break down all barriers of caste, color, and creed, which separate one person from another.

In its teaching, Buddhism has no features that confine it to a particular nation, particular time, or particular group of people. It is universal in its applicability and its appeal.

Buddhism and Sex[341] [342]

Buddhist monks and nuns are required to refrain from any expression of sexual desire and from all sexual activity. In joining the Order of Monks or Nuns, they have made a conscious decision to make a maximum effort to attain Liberation, and many of the rules, as well as the organization of the Orders, help monks and nuns avoid unnecessary stimulation of sensual desires. A man or a woman who is incapable of restraint is encouraged to leave the Orders and become a lay practitioner again, with no stigma attached, and they are free also to return to the Orders.

For lay practitioners, however, things are more complicated. The *Buddha* did not expect lay practitioners to practice sexual abstinence. To them, He advised restraint and mindfulness and avoidance of being excessively attached to sex. The sexual activity of lay practitioners is governed by the Third Precept, which requires lay practitioners to refrain from sexual misconduct, specifically, adultery, rape, and seduction.

Many people have miserable problems such as guilt, fear, and worry because our society does not understand nor respect the sexual nature of the human body. Because we are taught to relate to sexuality with guilt, fear, and worry, we do not feel our sexuality on a natural, instinctual level. Instead, we create endless problems for ourselves and others by exalting sexuality, or hating it, or fearing it, or becoming obsessed with it, or feeling guilty about it. We have lost our sense of proportion about what it should be in our lives. To follow the Third Precept means to accept and understand our sexuality. This means awakening to and understanding the impulses and energy we all have and coming to terms with our sexuality in a way that we can respect. We come to see that sexuality is not something that has to be divisive, exploitative, or selfish.

Sexuality has to be considered with honesty and integrity so that we are not exploiting it just for pleasure, as an escape, or as an obsessive habit. If sexuality is used in ways that humiliate other people or ourselves, it can cause endless pain, suffering, fear, divisiveness, and disruption. Adultery, rape, and seduction are always painful, divisive,

[341] This section is adapted from Chapter 13 of *The Mind and the Way: Buddhist Reflections on Life*, by Ajahn Sumedho (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1995]).

[342] It may be noted at this point that Buddhism condemns neither premarital sex nor homosexuality. The canonical literature supports the view that homosexuality is an organically or genetically based orientation, with the same moral significance (or insignificance) as heterosexuality.

and disruptive. They are not activities that promote respect and trust — they will not help us develop a spiritual life. Sexuality is a vital, instinctive drive. It needs to be understood, not judged, and it must be respected so that it can be used in ways that benefit ourselves and others.

Concluding Remarks

Some salient characteristics of Buddhism are, thus, its rationality, practicality, efficacy, non-aggressiveness, harmlessness, tolerance, and universality.

The *Buddha's* Teachings are the greatest heritage mankind has received from the past. The *Buddha's* message of nonviolence and peace, of love and compassion, of tolerance and understanding, of truth and wisdom, of respect and regard for all life, of freedom from selfishness, hatred, and violence, delivered over two thousand six hundred years ago, stands good for today and will stand forever as the Truth. It is an eternal message. ■

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16

The Original Teachings of the Buddha[343]

THE PĀḶI CANON

The Pāḷi Canon, known as the *Tipiṭaka*, or "Three Baskets", is divided, as its name indicates, into three parts: (1) the first, the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, is devoted largely to rules for the guidance of the *Sangha*; (2) the second, the *Sutta Piṭaka*, contains the discourses of the *Buddha* and several of His distinguished disciples and is devoted particularly to doctrinal and ethical teaching; and (3) the third, the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, which appears to have been compiled later than the other two divisions, contains additional doctrinal and ethical teaching, together with some metaphysical discussions. Though earlier divisions are known to have existed, the *Tipiṭaka* is the only arrangement of the Pāḷi Canon still in use among Theravādin Buddhists.

These Buddhist scriptures are essentially different from the scriptures of all other religions in that they do not claim divine inspiration or superhuman intervention of any kind, but are, by their own admission, the product of pure human insightfulness.

It is claimed that the great scholar-monk Buddhaghosa, who lived at the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth centuries CE, retranslated into Pāḷi the Sinhalese translation made by Mahinda of the original Pāḷi Commentaries for extensive parts of the *Tipiṭaka*, which had unfortunately been lost before the time of Buddhaghosa. It is further claimed that these original Pāḷi texts had been brought from India to Śri Lanka by Mahinda himself, immediately after the last of the three councils which were held for the purpose of collecting the Teachings of the *Buddha* and fixing, in accordance therewith, the disciplinary rules of the *Sangha* and the *Dhamma* taught by the *Buddha*. Buddhaghosa was also the author of the *Visuddhimagga*, a detailed exposition of the Theravādin tenets as taught at the Mahāvihāra Monastery in Anurādhapura, Śri Lanka. Some of the Pāḷi Commentaries were also prepared by Dhammapāla in the fifth or sixth century CE.

The first of these councils took place three months after the death of the *Buddha* and was made up of five hundred *Arahants* who, with Kassapa as their chosen leader, recited the precepts and discourses of the *Buddha* and took the first steps towards a methodical arrangement in two collections: (1) *Vinaya* — the disciplinary rules for the *Sangha*; and (2) the *Dhamma* — the ethical and doctrinal Teachings of the *Buddha*. These collections were thenceforth passed down orally from generation to generation.

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[343] This chapter is adapted from Chapter III, Dhamma, of Henry H. Tilbe's book, *Pāḷi Buddhism* (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press [1900]), pp. 19—35.

Sometime later, grave departures from the disciplinary rules began to develop among members of the *Sangha*, which was, consequently, becoming split into two factions: (1) an orthodox faction, favoring strict adherence to the established rules and (2) a laxer faction, favoring relaxation of those rules. A second council was held somewhere around 350 BCE, consisting of seven hundred members. At this council, the principles of the orthodox faction prevailed, the deviations from the disciplinary rules were prohibited, and the disciplinary rules and doctrines were again recited in the unaltered form and vindicated. However, the decisions of this council were not accepted by everyone, and the first open schism after the death of the *Buddha* occurred. Thus began the history of differing and antagonistic schools and sects.

A third council was held at Pāṭaliputta somewhere around 240 BCE, under the patronage of the great Indian ruler Asoka, also known as Dhammāsoka, the grandson of Chandragupta. This council consisted of a thousand members and, like the second council, was convened to settle disagreements among members of the *Sangha*. At this council, the disciplinary rules and the doctrines were again recited and, for the more conservative Theravādin School, definitively fixed. A fourth council was held around the beginning of the Common Era, but it was completely under the control of the less orthodox Sarvāstavādin School and had no bearing whatsoever on the Pāḷi Canon.

It was probably around this time that the Pāḷi Canon was first put into writing. It is certain, at least, that writing was well known at the time, inasmuch as Asoka used it widely in inscribing Buddhist edicts in the Pāḷi language throughout his extended empire. Asoka seems to have been the guiding spirit not only at the third council but also in the immediately subsequent history of Buddhism. It is unlikely that so astute a ruler would have let slip the advantages gained at the council, with the means available to him for fixing them. And it is quite clear that the Pāḷi Canon was settled from this time onward, as it would probably not have been, unless fixed in writing.

Both the first and second councils are mentioned in portions of the *Tipiṭaka* itself, but the third council is not. This makes it seem probable that portions of the Pāḷi Canon are at least as old as the second council and that all of its present contents were received at the time of the third. However, most of the Pāḷi Canon is known to be much older, and the majority of it undoubtedly gives us the authentic Teachings, if not always the exact words, of the *Buddha* Himself.

The Pāḷi *Piṭakas*, therefore, may safely be accepted as a reliable — of all the Buddhist scriptures thus far known, certainly the most reliable — source of information about the original Teachings which the *Buddha* Himself promulgated.

It must be stressed in this connection that the *Buddha* did not leave an immature, embryonic system, but that His doctrines had been fully developed and clearly stated long before His death. A long and vigorous life had gone into the development and statement of those doctrines. He spent six years of his life — from age 29 to age 35 — engaged in the most active and independent mental investigation ever undertaken, during which time He formulated the fundamentals of His system and shaped the forms of their expression. Then, He devoted the next forty-five years of His life to wide promulgation among people, who were, at first, uninterested, in private and public discussions with the most

bitter and most intelligent opponents and in constant teaching of enthusiastic adherents, employing the most logical and exacting methods of instruction and explanation.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF PRIMITIVE BUDDHISM

In approaching the careful examination of the fundamental doctrines of primitive Buddhism, one must constantly bear in mind the environment in which the system was conceived and developed. Of the principles that had come to be generally or universally accepted by His predecessors and contemporaries, the *Buddha* flatly denied certain that appeared to Him patently false, while He accepted others that appeared to Him patently true. He then modified certain others to agree with what He had accepted and yet would not necessitate what He had rejected. Lastly, He made certain original additions which perfected His system. These features include:

1. God and soul: One of the most characteristic and fundamental features of original Buddhism is its rejection of the ideas of God and of soul, self, or ego. The *Buddha's* system was absolutely atheistic, but without the materialistic doctrine which is often associated with atheism and which knows nothing higher than the world of the senses and the slight happiness it can bestow. No other feature of the system is so surprising to those who first encounter Buddhism. In no other doctrine did it differ more from Brahminism and other contemporary systems of philosophy. And, at no other point are several modern schools of Buddhism more at variance with the original. There have always been those who reject God, and there were such persons in the days of the *Buddha* — blasphemous atheists who mocked the idea of God and found in their atheism license for base indulgence; pessimistic atheists who rejected the idea of God and left mankind helpless and hopeless in the ceaseless world of suffering. But the *Buddha* was not such as these. He was unquestionably a chaste, earnest, and honest truth-seeker, looking for a way that would enable mankind to conquer lust and escape from suffering. In His search for truth, He had to rely solely upon His own intuition and powers of reason. To him, the idea of God seemed absolutely beyond proof, quite unnecessary in any system of belief, and utterly incapable of explaining either the cause or the cure of suffering. Therefore, He rejected it, and, with it, every form of worship, every form of sacrifice, and every kind of priestly intervention. He declared that belief in God and in the efficacy of worship was one of the three great delusions that must be entirely abandoned in the first stage of His path (*Sotāpanna*), and one of the four attachments (*upādāna*) that cause all woe and despair.

   The *Buddha* spoke of gods, demons, ghosts, etc. — good and evil spirits of every sort —, and He even retained their Brahmanical names, but He modified the nature of their positions and functions to suit His own views, which did not admit the existence of an Omnipotent Creator or any Supreme Being higher than the perfectly enlightened man. The gods, better called "celestial beings", are in no sense superior to other forms of life except that they temporarily inhabit more blissful abodes. Such

beings are subject to the universal law of dissolution, and, after death, they are succeeded by others, so that there is not one Brahmā or Sakka, but many successive deities so named, and many classes of deities under them. They have no power to affect anyone else's liberation. On the contrary, they must see to their own liberation.

When any being in any of the various realms of existence dies, he must be reborn in some other realm, based upon his *kamma*, for there is no other possibility. If he is reborn in one of the woeful (hell) realms, he is not thereby disbarred from seeking liberation, and, even if he is reborn in a celestial realm as a god, he must, at some time, leave it and seek a still higher state — that of the perfectly enlightened being.

In the *Buddha's* system, all sentient existence is thus really the same, and any particular temporary being — whether it be as a god, human, animal, ghost, demon, or whatever — is continuously changing, subject to that particular being's own control, inasmuch as any particular rebirth depends entirely on the volitional actions (*kamma*) of that particular being in a former existence. It must not be supposed, however, that the *Buddha* envisioned the doctrine of rebirth as a permanently existing soul (*attā*) migrating from one life to another, from one form of existence to another. He emphatically denied that there could be a permanent soul, self, or ego in this ever-changing cycle of sentient existence (*saṁsāra*). Just as He had rejected the idea of any real God, so, too, He utterly rejected the idea of a permanent soul, self, or ego. Belief in a permanent soul, self, or ego is another of those three primary delusions which has to be abandoned in the first stage of His path (*Sotāpanna*).

There is nothing in the doctrinal part of His system that the *Buddha* more strenuously maintained or made more essential to the acceptance of His system than the rejection of these two mistaken views.

2. Impermanence (*anicca*): The *Buddha*, in denying the existence of a Creator God and in rejecting the idea of a permanent soul, self, or ego, did not, in so doing, assume the eternal existence of matter. He held that the material universe, like sentient being, was continually changing in its passage through an unending cycle of existences. Indeed, He did not recognize any essential difference between animate and inanimate as to either cause or continuance. He recognized no real *being* but an ever-changing, never-ending process of *becoming*. Through countless "great eons" (*mahākappa*), each consisting itself of eons (*kappa*) upon eons, the destruction and regeneration of the universe (*cakkavāla*) goes on. Slowly, each new universe evolves from its predecessor, and, just as slowly, it disintegrates only to evolve immediately after its demise into another universe that succeeds it.

Kamma and the succession of cause and effect are constant and eternal. But, aside from these two abstract ideas, in all His Teachings, the *Buddha* reiterated and insisted upon the impermanence and unreality of everything else, mental or material, animate or inanimate. As stated in the *Dhammapada* (verses 277—279):

"All compound things (saṁkhārā) are impermanent (anicca); those who realize this through insight-wisdom (paññā) are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity."

"All compound things have suffering (dukkha) as their nature; those who realize this through insight-wisdom are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity."

"All states (dhammā) are without self (anattā); those who realize this through insight-wisdom are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity."

Impermanence (*anicca*), suffering, (*dukkha*), and no-self (*anattā*) are the three characteristics of all mental and physical phenomena, and are, consequently, the three great postulates of the *Buddha's* system. These three were prescribed as subjects of constant meditation, and were doubtless, from the start, as they still are today, often repeated in melancholy monotone as reminders — "*anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā*".

3. The aggregates (*khandha*): Having denied the existence of an abiding entity in the form of a soul, self, or ego, the *Buddha* replaced this false notion with an assemblage of five aggregates, as follows:

   A. Form, matter, materiality, or corporeality (*rūpa*): the collection, or aggregate, of material attributes, twenty-eight of which are enumerated.
   B. Feeling, or sensation (*vedanā*): the aggregate of the six classes of sensations received by the six senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind) through contact with a sense object, which are further divided into eighteen classes according to whether any one of them is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
   C. Perception (*saññā*): the aggregate of the six classes of abstract ideas which correspond with the six classes of sensations; this is the aggregate that recognizes an object.
   D. Mental formations (*saṁkhāra*): the aggregate of fifty mental factors (*cetasika*) of subjective discrimination, or imputation.
   E. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*): the aggregate of reaction, awareness, or response.

   These five aggregates comprise absolutely all that belongs to, or goes to make up, sentient being.

4. Volitional actions (*kamma*): The denial of a permanent soul, together with the doctrine of the five aggregates, made it impossible for the *Buddha* to accept the soul-transmigration theories of the Brahmins without radical modification. Consequently, He proposed a new interpretation of the doctrine of *kamma*. Literally, the word *kamma* means "volitional deeds", or "volitional actions". It should be noted that

kamma never refers to the results of deeds, or actions — technically, the results are called "*vipāka*".

According to this theory, at the death of any sentient being, a new being, that is, a new assemblage of aggregates (*khandha*), is immediately produced as a result of grasping and clinging (*upādāna*), and the conditions of the existence of the new being are determined by the accumulated *kamma* of its predecessor, which has just passed away. The production of the new assemblage of aggregates is simultaneous with the dissolution of the old, and the new being becomes a continuation of the old, not by the transmigration of a soul, but by the transference of personal *kamma*.

To Western minds, this doctrine is often difficult to grasp. That the accumulated *kamma* of another being who has entirely ceased to exist should be transferred to an entirely new being who never existed before and with whom it never had any apparent connection whatsoever seems impossible in itself. And yet, this doctrine provides the only reasonable answer as to why there are such stark differences in the characters, personalities, and innate aptitudes of beings. There is no other doctrine, moreover, in the whole Buddhist system, except perhaps the doctrine of *nibbāna*, so distinctly original with the *Buddha*, and nothing else that has persisted so unchanged through all schools and sects of Buddhism. It is unquestionably the driving force behind Buddhist ethics — the actuating principle in most, if not all, of the conscious, intentional righteousness and benevolence in the lives of the millions of those who have claimed to be Buddhists during more than twenty-six centuries.

5. Four Noble Truths (*ariya-saccāni*): The "Four Noble Truths" might be reckoned the essence of Buddhism. They constitute the epitome of the fundamental doctrines of the system, subscribing to which, one is said to have "entered the path". Those who have not entered the path are said to be "deluded" — *sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā* "all worldlings are deluded". If, however, they are led, through association with the wise, through hearing the *Dhamma*, and through the practice of virtue, to see and realize these "Noble Truths", they will have entered the path. These truths are universal, not bound up with any particular country or any particular epoch. And, in everyone, even in the lowliest, there lies latent the capacity for seeing and realizing these truths and attaining to the highest perfection.

   These Four Noble Truths are as follows:

   A. The First Noble Truth, about the universality of suffering (*dukkha*), teaches, in short, that all forms of existence are uncertain, transient, contingent, and devoid of intrinsic self-identity and are, therefore, by their very nature subject to suffering.

      The word "*dukkha*" is technically used to express every variety or possible idea of pain, sorrow, suffering, affliction, hardship, grief, unrealized anticipation of pleasure, active disappointment, distress, etc. The *Buddha* does not deny that there is happiness, enjoyment, and pleasure in life. However, due to their fleeting nature, even these are reckoned as *dukkha*. Consequently, the *Buddha* enjoins His

followers to abandon such pleasures and, instead, to seek the joys of a life devoted to realizing the truth.

B. The Second Noble Truth, about the origin (*samudaya*) of suffering, teaches that all suffering is rooted in selfish craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). It further explains the cause of this seeming injustice in nature by teaching that nothing in the world can come into existence without a reason or a cause and that, not only all our latent tendencies, but our whole destiny, all weal and woe, results from causes that can be traced partly in this life and partly in former states of existence.

The Second Noble Truth further teaches us that the future life, with all its weal and woe, must result from the seeds sown in this life and in former lives.

To be more precise, the word "*taṇhā*" is used technically to express every kind of desire or craving possible for a sentient being. It is produced by "feeling" ("sensation") (*vedanā*), arising from contact of the six sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind) with sense objects. Now, this *taṇhā* is not only the cause of suffering but, even more directly, of life itself, for *taṇhā* causes clinging (*upādāna*), which, as we have already seen, produces, at the death of any sentient being, the new assemblage of aggregates (*khandha*), to which the accumulated *kamma* of the old being is passed on.

It is, in reality, but one of the twelve links in a chain of cause and effect described by the doctrine of "Dependent Origination" (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), by which the *Buddha* accounted for the arising of universal suffering. This doctrine consists of twelve links arranged in eleven propositions. These propositions are as follows:

1. Ignorance (*avijjā*) conditions volitional formations (*saṁkhāra*);
2. Volitional formations (*saṁkhāra*) condition consciousness (*viññāṇa*);
3. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*) conditions mind-body (*nāma-rūpa*);
4. Mind-body (*nāma-rūpa*) conditions the six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*);
5. The six sense bases (*saḷāyatana*) condition contact (*phassa*);
6. Contact (*phassa*) conditions sensation (*vedanā*);
7. Sensation (feeling) (*vedanā*) conditions craving (*taṇhā*);
8. Craving (*taṇhā*) conditions clinging (*upādāna*);
9. Clinging (attachment) (*upādāna*) conditions becoming (*bhava*);
10. Becoming (conditioned existence) (*bhava*) conditions rebirth (*jāti*);
11. Rebirth (*jāti*) conditions aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair (*jarāmaraṇaṁ*).

In other words, the ultimate cause of all that is undesirable in life, and even of life itself, is ignorance (*avijjā*). But, the more immediate cause and, for all practical considerations, the more important cause, is craving (*taṇhā*). If, then, craving can be destroyed, release from all suffering might be attained. This leads to the Third Noble Truth.

C. The Third Noble Truth, or the truth about the cessation (*nirodha*) of suffering, shows how, through the destruction of craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*), all suffering will disappear, and liberation from cyclic existence (*saṁsāra*) will be attained. This liberation is termed "*nibbāna*", and it is the goal of Buddhism.

Literally, "*nibbāna*" means "extinction". This extinction, however, does not mean the extinction of *life*, but of *craving*. It expresses that condition of life wherein an *Arahant* has utterly extinguished all desire, or craving, of every sort, all ignorance, all defilements, all taints, all fetters, and all attachment to existence in any form whatsoever.

D. The Fourth Noble Truth shows the way, or the means, by which the cessation of suffering is to be reached. It is the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhangika-magga*) of: (1) Right Understanding; (2) Right Thought; (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Action; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Mindfulness; and (8) Right Concentration.

Each truth requires that it be acted upon in its own particular way — *understanding* suffering, *letting go of* its origin, *realizing* its cessation, and *cultivating* the path. In describing to the five ascetics what His awakening meant, the *Buddha* spoke of having discovered complete freedom of heart and mind from the compulsions of craving. He called such freedom "the taste of *Dhamma*".

6. The Four Stages of Sainthood (*ariya-puggala*): Those who persevere on the Noble Eightfold Path will pass successively through the Four Stages of Sainthood, wherein they will be freed from ten "Fetters" (*saṁyojana*), that is, ten mental obstructions that stand in the way of self-purification and that bind beings to the round of existences (*saṁsāra*):

1. Personality belief — the delusion of selfhood;
2. Skeptical doubt — doubt about the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*;
3. Attachment to rites and rituals — this includes any kind of a belief in a Supreme Being, together with all charms, rites, ceremonies, or other forms of worship;
4. Desire for gratification of the senses — this includes every conceivable form of desire for sensory gratification;
5. Ill-will — this includes all forms of anger, hatred, aversion, resentment, and the like, no matter how subtle;
6. Craving for fine-material existence — the desire for existence in bodily, material form, whether as a human being on earth or as a celestial being in one of the lower celestial realms;
7. Craving for immaterial existence — the desire for existence without bodily, material form, as a celestial being in one of the higher celestial realms;
8. Conceit — there are three types of conceit which must be overcome: (a) equality conceit; (b) inferiority conceit; and (c) superiority conceit;

9. Restlessness — an unsettled, agitated, or excited state of mind;
10. Ignorance — this is synonymous with "delusion" (*moha*), the primary root of all evil and suffering in the world.

The Four Stages of Sainthood are:

1. One who has put an end to the first three Fetters is known as a "Stream-Winner", or "Stream-Enterer" (*Sotāpanna*); he has entered the stream of liberation, and his destiny has become fixed. He cannot be born in any sphere lower than the human, and if he does not attain full liberation earlier, he is bound to do so within the course of seven lives at the most. One who has reached this stage becomes incapable of committing any of the unwholesome deeds that lead to rebirth in sub-human realms of suffering.
2. When, in addition, the next two Fetters are weakened, he becomes a "Once-Returner" (*Sakadāgāmī*); he will not have to endure more than one rebirth in the sensory spheres, which means that, if he fails to reach *nibbāna* in the current life, he is bound to do so in the next birth.
3. When all of the first five Fetters, which are known as the "Grosser Fetters", are completely destroyed, he becomes a "Non-Returner" (*Anāgāmī*); he who will not be born again in the sensory spheres. If he does not gain *nibbāna* before he dies, he will reach it in the next birth, which occurs in the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*). There, he attains Arahantship and passes straight to *nibbāna* without returning to the sensory planes.
4. When all ten Fetters are destroyed, he attains the state of *Arahant*. He has then realized the Paths and Fruits of the holy life, and, for him, the painful round of rebirth (*saṁsāra*) has come to an end.

These Four Stages of Sainthood are sometimes separated by intervals, sometimes they follow immediately after one another, but at each stage the "Fruit" (*phala*), or attainment, follows instantly upon the realization of the Path in the series of thought-moments (*cittakkhaṇa*). When the thought-moment of insight flashes forth, the meditator knows beyond all doubt the nature of his attainment and what, if anything, still needs to be accomplished.

The above points constitute a fair and complete outline of the characteristic and important features of the *Buddha's* Teaching.

That Teaching is eminently practical. The *Buddha* always refused to enter upon metaphysics or the discussion of topics not relevant to the purpose of the *Dhamma*, which was to answer, practically, those two burning questions as to the origin of suffering and the way to escape from it. That there was knowledge outside this narrow domain, He readily admitted, and He claimed, as *Buddha*, to be familiar with it. But, He claimed that it was utterly useless — everything which was not pertinent to the escape from suffering was a hindrance, and, as such, an evil to be absolutely avoided.

BUDDHIST MORALITY

The most practical part of the *Buddha's* Teaching is the system of ethics included in the Fourth Noble Truth, for Buddhist ethical precepts most certainly encourage much that is in itself praiseworthy — recognizing, as they do, not only man's duty of external moral conduct, but also his need of inner purity.

For Buddhist Monks, the training in morality consists of the observance of 227 rules, while Buddhist Nuns must follow an additional set of rules. The collection of these rules is called the *Pāṭimokkha*, that is, the "Code of Conduct", or "Disciplinary Rules", and is a part of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

Lay practitioners observe either five or eight rules of moral training, the so-called "Five Precepts" (*pañca-sīla*) or "Eight Precepts" (*aṭṭhanga-sīla*). In any kind of spiritual development, aspirants need to establish their practice on moral principles so that they feel self-respect and stability. The training rules provide a guide that they can use for proper behavior in their daily lives, and observance of these rules provides the foundation for the practice of meditation (*bhāvanā*) and the attainment of wisdom (*paññā*).

The Five Precepts are:

1. To abstain from taking life;
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given;
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct;
4. To abstain from false speech;
5. To abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.

The Eight Precepts include the above five together with three additional precepts; here, the third precept is changed to prohibit any and all types of sexual activity:

1. To abstain from taking life;
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given;
3. To abstain from all sexual activity;
4. To abstain from false speech;
5. To abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness;
6. To abstain from eating any solid food after noon;
7. To abstain from dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows; from the use of garlands, perfumes, and unguents; and from things that tend to beautify and adorn;
8. To abstain from high and luxurious beds and seats.

The Five Precepts, the first and most important Buddhist ethical principles, are applicable to all alike. The Eight Precepts, on the other hand, are not obligatory for lay disciples, and yet, all earnest followers of the *Buddha* are expected to observe them at certain times, especially on Uposatha Days.

There is also a set of Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*). Here, the seventh precept is divided into two, and a tenth precept is added not to accept gold or silver. Only very

pious lay persons undertake to observe the Ten Precepts, and, then, only for a specified period of time covered by a special vow. All ten are obligatory for members of the *Sangha*, and, in their observance, the third precept requires absolute chastity.

There are ten "Mental Defilements" (*kilesa*) that must be vanquished, the first three of which are referred to as the "Three Unwholesome Roots" (*akusalamūlāni*):

1. Greed (*lobha*);
2. Hatred (*dosa*);
3. Delusion (*moha*);
4. Conceit (*māna*);
5. Speculative views (*diṭṭhi*);
6. Skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*);
7. Mental torpor (*thīna*);
8. Restlessness (*uddhacca*);
9. Shamelessness (*ahirika*);
10. Lack of moral dread, or unconscientiousness (*anottappa*).

Likewise, there are four "Taints", or "Cankers" (*āsava*), that must be destroyed:

1. Wrong views (*diṭṭhāsava*);
2. Sense-desire (*kāmāsava*);
3. Desire for (eternal) existence (*bhavāsava*);
4. Ignorance (*avijjāsava*).

The Taint of wrong views is eliminated through the path of Stream-Entry, the Taint of sense-desire is eliminated through the path of Non-Returning, and the remaining two Taints are eliminated through the path of Arahantship.

The Taints are to be overcome through insight, sense-control, avoidance, wise use of the necessities of life, etc.

Finally, there are ten "Fetters" (*saṁyojana*) that must be eradicated. These are discussed above under the Four Stages of Sainthood.

In addition to this merely negative morality, which consists of avoiding and/or eliminating unwholesome, corrupting deeds of body, speech, and mind, there are positive aspects which promote the cultivation of meritorious, wholesome deeds, together with states of heart both benevolent and pure.

Among these are the four "Divine Abodes" (*brahmavihāra*). They are also called *appamaññā* "limitless, boundless", because these thoughts are radiated towards all beings without limit or obstruction. The system of meditation on the Divine Abodes has come to occupy a central position in the field of mental training (*bhāvanā*) in Buddhism. Its exercises include the development of the following four higher sentiments:

1. Loving-kindness (*mettā*);
2. Compassion (*karuṇā*);

3. Sympathetic, or altruistic, joy (*muditā*);
4. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

From an ethical point of view, these four principles emphasize the moral foundation of every form of religious life and are considered indispensable to spiritual development.

Next, there are the so-called "Seven Jewels" (*satta-ratanāni*), also known as the "Requisites of Enlightenment" (*bodhipakkhiya-dhammā*), which is a collection of active virtues that are to be most strenuously sought and guarded:

1. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*): This is equivalent to the seventh step of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Mindfulness, or alertness of mind. It consists of abiding self-possessed and attentive, contemplating according to reality:

   A. The body (*kāya*);
   B. Feelings (*vedanā*);
   C. The state of the mind (*citta*);
   D. The contents of the mind, or mind objects (*dhamma*);

   seeing all as composite, ever-becoming, impermanent, and subject to decay. It is maintaining ever-ready mental clarity no matter what we are doing, speaking, or thinking and in keeping before our mind the realities of existence, that is, the impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactory nature (*dukkha*), and egolessness (*anattā*) of all forms of existence.

2. Right Effort (*sammappadhāna*): This is equivalent to the sixth step of the Noble Eightfold Path and is the fourfold effort one makes to put forth the energy, to prod the mind, and to struggle:

   A. To prevent unarisen unwholesome mental states from arising;
   B. To abandon unwholesome mental states that have already arisen;
   C. To develop wholesome mental states that have not yet arisen;
   D. To maintain and perfect wholesome mental states that have already arisen.

   In other words, it is the fourfold effort that one makes to overcome and avoid fresh bad actions by body, speech, and mind; and the effort that one makes in developing fresh actions of righteousness, inner peace, and wisdom, and in cultivating them to perfection.

3. Roads to Power (*iddhipāda*): This consists of the following four qualities:

   A. Concentration of intention accompanied by effort of will;
   B. Concentration of energy accompanied by effort of will;
   C. Concentration of consciousness accompanied by effort of will;
   D. Concentration of investigation accompanied by effort of will.

4. Spiritual Faculties (*indriya*): This includes the following five factors:

   A. Faith (*saddhā*);
   B. Energy (*viriya*);
   C. Mindfulness (*sati*);
   D. Concentration (*samādhi*);
   E. Wisdom (*paññā*).

5. Powers (*bala*): The list of the powers includes the same factors as that of the spiritual faculties given above:

   A. Faith (*saddhā*);
   B. Energy (*viriya*);
   C. Mindfulness (*sati*);
   D. Concentration (*samādhi*);
   E. Wisdom (*paññā*).

   According to Nyanatiloka, the powers are distinguished from the spiritual faculties in that they are unshakable by their opposites. They represent, therefore, the aspect of firmness in the spiritual faculties.

6. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*bojjhanga*): They are so called because they lead to Enlightenment. They are:

   A. Mindfulness (*sati*);
   B. Investigation of the *Dhamma* (*dhamma*);
   C. Energy (*viriya*);
   D. Rapture (*pīti*);
   E. Tranquility (*passaddhi*);
   F. Concentration (*samādhi*);
   G. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

7. The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhangika-magga*): The Noble Eightfold Path has already been discussed above. It consists of:

   A. Right Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*);
   B. Right Thought (*sammā-sankappa*);
   C. Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*);
   D. Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*);
   E. Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*);
   F. Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*);
   G. Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*);
   H. Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

Finally, there are the ten "Perfections" (*pāramī*, or *pāramitā*), also known as the "Transcendental Virtues". These are ten qualities leading to Buddhahood. They are:

1. Generosity (*dāna*);
2. Morality (*sīla*);
3. Renunciation (*nekkhamma*);
4. Wisdom (*paññā*);
5. Energy (*viriya*);
6. Patience (*khanti*);
7. Truthfulness (*sacca*);
8. Determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*);
9. Loving-kindness (*mettā*);
10. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

It will be noticed that there is a great deal of repetition in these lists, the same vice or virtue being frequently repeated in a slightly different view or connection. One may find such repetitions tiresome, but they serve to show where emphasis is laid.

Besides these formal divisions of vices to be avoided and virtues to be cultivated, there are many passages scattered throughout the older portions of the Pāḷi Canon in which these lists occur again and again. Self-restraint; the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion; the avoidance of moral defilement and laxity; the breaking of all ties that bind one to sense desire; the cultivation of purity, generosity, loving-kindness, patience, determination, wisdom, truthfulness, and equanimity — these are duties that are taught both by precept and example, in story, dialog, parable, and simile throughout the entire Pāḷi Canon.

Moreover, it is clearly taught and frequently repeated that an outward, exemplary lifestyle in these respects is not sufficient — one's inner character must be brought into perfect harmony with these principles as well. ■

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17

The Pāḷi Canon

"Though one may be well-versed in the scriptures and be able to recite them from beginning to end, if one does not put into practice their teachings, then such a heedless one may be likened to a cowherd who counts someone else's cattle — that one will gain none of the benefits of living the Holy Life.

"Though one may know little of the scriptures, if one nonetheless puts into practice their teachings, forsaking lust, hatred, and false views, truly knowing, with a disciplined mind, clinging to nothing either in this life or the next, then that one will surely gain the benefits of living the Holy Life."[344]

Tipiṭaka

The *Buddha* has passed away, but the sublime Teaching, which He expounded during His long and successful ministry and which He unreservedly bequeathed to humanity, still exists in its pristine purity.

Although the Master left no written records of His Teachings, His faithful disciples preserved them by committing them to memory and transmitting them orally from generation to generation.

Three months after the death of the *Buddha*, in the eighth year of King Ajātasattu's reign, five hundred pre-eminent *Arahants*, concerned with preserving the purity of the doctrine, held a convocation in Rājagaha to recite it. Venerable Ānanda Thera, the *Buddha's* beloved attendant, who had the special privilege and honor of hearing the discourses from the *Buddha* Himself, and Venerable Upāli Thera, who was the most knowledgeable about the Disciplinary Rules, were chosen to answer questions about the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya*, respectively.

The First Council compiled and arranged the Teachings and the Disciplinary Rules in their present form, which are preserved intact in the Pāḷi *Tipiṭaka*.[345] The *Tipiṭaka* represents the entire body of the *Buddha's* Teaching.

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[344] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verses 19—20.

[345] Sanskrit *Tripiṭaka*. The word *Tipiṭaka* means "Three Baskets." This designation is most likely derived from the practice of storing the texts in three baskets. The texts pertaining to the *Vinaya*, or Disciplinary

Two other Councils[346] of *Arahants* were held 100 years and 236 years later, respectively, again to recite the Word of the *Buddha*, because attempts were being made to pollute the pure Teaching.

About 83 BCE, during the reign of the pious Śri Lankan King Vaṭṭa Gāmaṇi Abhaya[347] (104—77 BCE), a Council of *Arahants* was held, and the *Tipiṭaka* was, for the first time in the history of Buddhism, committed to writing at Aluvihāra[348] in Śri Lanka (Ceylon).

Thanks to the tireless efforts of those foresighted *Arahants*, there is no room, either now or in the future, for any group or individual to adulterate the pure Teachings of the *Buddha*.

Vinaya Piṭaka

Overview

The *Vinaya Piṭaka*, which is regarded as the sheet anchor of the Holy Order, deals mainly with the rules and regulations of the Order of *Bhikkhus* (Monks) and *Bhikkhunīs* (Nuns). For nearly twenty years after the Enlightenment of the *Buddha*, no definite rules were laid down for the control and discipline of the *Sangha* (Holy Order). Subsequently, as occasion arose, the *Buddha* promulgated rules for the discipline of the *Sangha*. The reasons for the promulgation of the rules, their various implications, and specific *Vinaya* ceremonies of the *Sangha* are fully described in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The history of the development of the *sāsana*[349] from its very inception, a brief account of the life and ministry of the *Buddha*, and details of the first three Councils are some of the other material contained in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Indirectly, the *Vinaya Piṭaka* reveals useful information about ancient Indian history, customs, arts, and sciences. One who reads the *Vinaya Piṭaka* cannot but be impressed by the democratic constitution of the *Sangha*, their holding of possessions in common, the exceptionally high moral standard of the *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunīs*, and the unsurpassed administrative abilities of the *Buddha*.

Rules, were stored in one basket, the *Sutta* texts, or Discourses, were stored in a second basket, and the *Abhidhamma* texts, or Higher Teachings, were stored in a third basket.

[346] Details about these Councils are preserved in the *Mahāvaṁsa*, the "Great Chronicle" of Śri Lanka, which was composed around the sixth century CE.

[347] King Vaṭṭa Gāmaṇi Abhaya ruled from 89—77 BCE. He is also known for the *stūpa* (Pāḷi *thūpa*) he had constructed in the capital, Anurādhapura. It is known as Abhayagiriya, and it measures 327 ft. in diameter at the base.

[348] Aluvihāra is a hamlet in the interior of Śri Lanka about 24 miles from Kandy. This sacred rock temple is still a place of pilgrimage for the Buddhists of Śri Lanka. The *Buddhaghosuppatti*, a biography of the great commentator Buddhaghosa, states that the amount of books written on *ola* leaves, when piled up, would exceed the height of six elephants.

[349] *Sāsana*, literally, "message," that is, the Buddhist religion, teachings, doctrines.

Textual Analysis[350]

The content of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* is by no means uniform, for, in addition to the disciplinary rules, there are also stories, partly of the *Jātaka* variety, even passages devoted to a description of meditative practices or other aspects of the *Dhamma*.

The purpose of the *Vinaya* is to regulate the life within the community (*Sangha*) of monks (*bhikkhu*) and nuns (*bhikkhunī*), as well as their relationship to lay people. These disciplinary rules may be divided broadly into two parts. The first part of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* contains the rules, which every single member of the *Sangha* is required to keep, and the second part is concerned with legal procedures. Thus, the first part refers to the individual members of the *Sangha*, and the second part to the *Sangha* as a whole.

The *Vibhanga* (also called *Suttavibhanga*) contains the *Pātimokkha*, together with an old Commentary on that text. It is divided into the *Mahāvibhanga*, "the great explanation," or *Bhikkhuvibhanga*, "the explanation (of the rules) for *Bhikkhus*," and the much shorter *Bhikkhunīvibhanga*, "the explanation (of the rules) for *Bhikkhunīs*." Rules applicable to both monks and nuns are not repeated in the *Bhikkhunīvibhanga*.

The *Pātimokkha* contains the 227 disciplinary rules for *Bhikkhus* and the 331 rules for *Bhikkhunīs*. Every monk and nun is required to learn them by heart so that they can join in their recitation every fortnight on the *uposatha* days.

The *Pātimokkha* text is the only one that has come down to us embedded in a second one, that being its Commentary. However, manuscripts containing only the *Bhikkhu Pātimokkha* — rarely also the *Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha* — do exist. The separate existence of the *Pātimokkha* text seems to be guaranteed also by its Commentary, the *Kankhāvitaraṇī*.

The rules of the *Pātimokkha* are arranged in seven groups, to which an enumeration of seven different legal procedures elaborated in the *Khandhaka* has been added as the eighth part.

The legal structure of the *Pātimokkha* is clear. The rules are arranged in such a way that the severest offenses, the *pārājika* "major offenses," are named first, and the lightest, the *sekkhiya* (also spelled *sekhiya*) "etiquette and decorum rules," which relate only to good behavior in general, are placed at the end. The textual structure, on the other hand, shows that the *Pātimokkha* must have developed over a certain period of time before it was shaped into its current form. Details of this process have never really been investigated.

By the end of the nineteenth century, it had already been observed in a study by H. Jacobi (1850—1937) that pre-Buddhist material had been incorporated into the *Pātimokkha*. At any rate, the basic rules, such as abstaining from killing (*ahiṁsā*), from sexual intercourse (*methunadhamma*), from stealing (*adinnādāna*), and from telling lies (*musāvāda*), are common to Brahmanical ascetics, Jains, and Buddhist monks and nuns.

[350] This section is adapted from Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 8—23.

The terminology, however, and the formulation of the rules differ, and Buddhists and Jains seem to be united as opposed to the Brahmins in using the terms *methuna(dhamma)* for sexual offenses and *pāṇātipāta* for killing living beings. The latter term did not make its way into the *Pātimokkha*, where the general rule of *ahiṁsā*, "harmlessness," has been divided into two: only the killing of human beings constitutes the third *pārājika* (major offenses) offense, while hurting other beings is mentioned only in the eleventh *pācittiya* (minor offenses) offense. In the same way, it is striking that telling a lie is not a *pārājika* offense.

The *pārājika* rules begin by *yo pana bhikkhu* ... "if any monk …" and thus use a frequent wording typical for both Buddhists and Jains, but, once again, unknown in Brahmanical texts. With the exception of the *sekkhiya* rules, which do not seem to have originally been part of the *Pātimokkha*, about two-thirds of the rules begin in such a way. This is especially true for all four *pārājika* rules, which can, consequently, be recognized as reformulated, although their content is by no means exclusively Buddhist, with the exception of the fourth *pārājika* rule on falsely boasting of supernormal powers.

At the same time, the very circumstantial formulation of the second *pārājika* rule on theft (stealing) or the third rule on taking a human life or inducing another to commit suicide shows that the *Buddha* aimed at a very precise juridical definition of what theft and murder really meant, something quite new in the development of Indian thought.

Other rules are formulated in a much simpler way, such as the first *pācittiya* rule: *sampajānamusāvade pācittiyaṁ* "if there is a conscious lie, an expiation (is necessary)." Rules of this type are rare, only about 10% out of the old *Pātimokkha* of about 150 rules. All these rules are found in the *pācittiya* section, and always at the beginning of a group of ten rules. At the same time, these brief rules, which link the *Pātimokkha* to the five precepts (*pañca-sīla*) and to the ten precepts (*dasa-sīla*), are the only ones in the *Pātimokkha* that may be regarded as true *suttas*. Thus, we find here an important clue concerning the genesis of the *Pātimokkha*.

Both the long sections of the *Pātimokkha*, the thirty *nissaggiyā pācittiya* rules and the ninety-two *pācittiya* rules are subdivided into groups of ten. Within these groups, single rules are often connected by concatenation in such a way that certain keywords occur in a sequence of rules.

The structure of the *Vibhanga* (*Suttavibhanga*) is determined by the sequence of rules in the *Pātimokkha* upon which it comments. Every single rule is embedded in a text that begins with an introductory story (*vatthu*) describing the occasion on which the rule was prescribed by the *Buddha*. Then follows the rule as such (*paññatti*), which may be supplemented with additional conditions (*anupaññatti*), and which is accompanied by a word-for-word explanation (*padabhājaniya*). Finally, exceptions to the rule (*anāpatti* "no offense") are enumerated. Sometimes, there is a further paragraph containing, as examples, cases assumed to have been solved by the *Buddha* (*vinītavatthu*), meant to give guidance to later *Vinaya* experts.

The introductory story does not always really suit the rule. In some cases, those monks who created them obviously misunderstood the relevant rule of the *Pātimokkha*. Thus, it is not as astonishing as it may seem, because many rules, such as the sixth and

seventh *sanghādisesa* rules concerning the construction of very small monasteries, were outdated very early on, no longer applied, and their meaning forgotten. It is therefore evident that these stories are separated from the rules by a considerable period of time.

Although some introductory stories have been derived from the rules themselves, others reoccur in different parts of the Canon. Thus, the introduction to the first *pārājika* rule runs parallel to the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta, *Majjhima Nikāya*, no. 82. Here, the *Vinaya Piṭaka* seems to have preserved the older version. On the other hand, the introduction to the eighty-third *pācittiya* rule evidently quotes from the *Dasakanipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. Sometimes, parallels to these stories are found in the *Jātakas*, or even in the *Vinayas* of other schools.

It seems that the Commentary on the rules is roughly contemporaneous with the introduction. The *anāpatti* formulas, however, seem to be still younger. Moreover, this part of the *Vibhanga* is missing in the texts of several other *Vinaya* schools.

From the point of view of Buddhist law, the introductions are unnecessary. Perhaps their existence can be explained by a certain parallelism with the *Mahāvagga*, where rules laid down are related to the career of the *Buddha*, beginning with His Enlightenment.

In the same way, the *Vibhanga* begins with a text describing this event, which is different from the version found in the *Mahāvagga*. The text used in the *Vibhanga* has been borrowed from the *Aṭṭhakanipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. Then, the magical powers of Moggallāna are mentioned, and, finally, Sāriputta, worrying about the duration of the *Dhamma*, asks the *Buddha* why the teaching of some former *Buddhas* did not last for a long period of time. This is the true beginning of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, because the *Buddha* reassures Sāriputta that He will prescribe rules as soon as a monk does something wrong.

This interesting remark shows that the compiler(s)/editor(s) who created the *Vibhanga* must have been well aware of the fact that the rules of the *Pātimokkha* are not arranged chronologically but, rather, systematically. For the first offender actually is Upasena Vangaputta, and not Sudinna, whose breach of chastity is the reason for prescribing the first *pārājika* rule.

Perhaps it is only by chance that Moggallāna and Sāriputta are mentioned here, for the first rules are laid down in the *Mahāvagga* only after Moggallāna and Sāriputta had become followers of the *Buddha*. Further, in the *Vibhanga*, the *Buddha* first visits Benares without any obvious reason before He meets Sudinna in Vesālī, who is the first monk to commit a breach of chastity. Again, the *Buddha* is near Benares to deliver His first sermon at Sarnath as described in the *Mahāvagga*.

The intention to build a general introduction to the *Vibhanga*, which runs parallel to the one of the *Mahāvagga*, may have been the reason why the original introduction was replaced. For, while the connecting texts necessary for the recitation of the *Pātimokkha* have been incorporated into the *Vibhanga*, the general introduction to the recitation still found in the *Pātimokkha* manuscripts has disappeared altogether from the *Vibhanga*, but it is still preserved in the *Mahāvagga*, where it is even provided with a Commentary. Commentaries as part of the text, on the other hand, are typical for the

Vibhanga, but not for the *Khandhaka*, where this is a unique instance. This Commentary ends with a reference to the *jhānas*, which still are the main subject of the general introduction to the *Vibhanga*. Thus, it may be conjectured that some form of the original introduction to the *Vibhanga* perhaps survives in the *Khandhaka*.

The *Bhikkhunī Vibhanga* is built on the model of the *Mahāvibhanga*. It is found only rarely as a separate text in the manuscripts, because it had been out of use for centuries.[351]

While the *Vibhanga* has grown around the *Pātimokkha*, another important set of rules is found, though not systematically arranged, in the *Khandhaka*. These are the *kammavācā*,[352] which exist as separate texts in an extremely broad manuscript tradition. These rules have to be recited in different legal procedures of the *Sangha*, such as the ordination of monks. An edition of the existing manuscripts, which contains differing sets of *kammavācā*, as well as a collection of these rules found in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and its Commentary, the *Samantapāsādikā*, is badly needed.

The name *Khandhaka*, which is typical for Theravādin Buddhism, means "mass, multitude" and is used in the names for the twenty-two chapters of this part of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Only rarely are these chapters called by other names, such as *campeyyake vinayavatthusmiṁ*. Such terminology, however, is common in other *Vinaya* schools: for example, the Mūlasarvāstavādins use *vinayavastu*, and the Mahāsanghikalokottaravādins use *poṣadhapratisaṁyukta*.

The *Khandhaka* is divided into two parts: (1) *Mahāvagga* "great division" and (2) *Cullavagga* (or *Cūḷavagga*) "small division." The *Mahāvagga* contains ten, and the *Cullavagga* twelve, *Khandhakas*. Since the last two *Khandhakas* of the *Cullavagga* give the accounts of the first two Councils, these may be later supplements to a *Khandhaka* being divided into decades, just as, for example, the *nissaggiya* and *pācittiya* sections of the *Vibhanga*.

The basic structure of the *Khandhaka* is as follows: The *Mahāvagga* begins with an account of the Enlightenment of the *Buddha*, which is the starting point for the foundation of the Buddhist Order soon afterwards, and with the relevant rules for the ordination of monks. At the end of the *Cullavagga*, the account of the second Council held at Vesālī[353] refers to the origins of the Theravādins. This historical narrative holds the text together as a bracket. After having presented the lower (*pabbajjā*) and higher (*upasaṁpadā*) ordination, in I. *Mahākhandhaka*, the II.—IV. *Khandhaka* describe the procedures connected to important events of the ecclesiastical year. Other chapters contain highly technical legal matters such as I. *Kaṭhinakkhandhaka* on robes or IX. *Campeyyakkhandhaka* on different procedures. This continues in the first four chapters of the *Cullavagga*. The chapter, which was, perhaps, originally the last one, is that devoted to the foundation of the Order of *Bhikkhunīs*: X. *Bhikkhunikkhandhaka*. This, again, runs parallel to the *Vibhanga*, which ends with the *Bhikkhunīvibhanga*.

[351] The Order of Nuns (*Bhikkhunīs*) was reestablished in the Theravādin tradition in 1996.
[352] Sanskrit *karmavākya*.
[353] Sanskrit *Vaiśālī*.

The model for the *Khandhaka* seems ultimately to reside in the *Brāhmaṇas*.[354] Just as the rules for the Vedic ritual sacrifices are not simply enumerated there but also explained, the Buddhist *Vinaya*, too, gives explanations as to why the rules had to be prescribed. The Buddhists, though, went far beyond the simple structure of small *Brāhmaṇa* texts when they assembled their laws and created the *Vinaya*.

If the collection of *suttas* in the *Sutta Piṭaka* is compared to the *Vinaya*, there is hardly any trace of a systematic order. Each discourse is a unit of its own, very often without any recognizable connection to the previous or to the following ones.

It is, however, not only in regard to the systematic arrangement that the *Vinaya* differs from the *sutta* collection. Even at first glance, it is striking that the stereotypical beginning of a *sutta*[355] is alien to the *Vinaya*, where texts begin with "at that particular time, the *Buddha* stayed at …" This difference has not escaped the attention of the Commentaries. They explain the expression "at that particular time" as referring to the time when a certain rule was prescribed.

The difficulty remains, however, why the *Vibhanga* and the *Khandhaka* begin in this way, where a reference to a rule is excluded. The Commentary has no answer: "it is traditionally like this." This situation could be explained as follows: The compiler(s)/ editor(s) of the *Khandhaka* wanted to avoid the traditional beginning of the *suttas*, because they were consciously creating a new text as a whole, which was not a mere collection of many single texts, such as the individual *suttas*. If this is true, then it was obvious to leave out the stereotypical beginning of the *sutta* in question and to begin with the next sentence.

As in the *Vibhanga*, in the *Khandhaka*, too, texts are found that have been taken over from the earlier *Sutta Piṭaka*. It is interesting to note that, in these cases, the beginning of the text has been adjusted to the new context: as mentioned above, the stereotypical introduction has been dropped to fit the text into the *Vinaya*. These parallel texts, which are still in need of a detailed investigation, are as important for the relative dating of texts as for the structure of the individual chapters of the *Khandhaka*.

Moreover, parallels are found within the *Vinaya* itself. A paragraph important in this respect is the conversion of the three Kassapa brothers by the *Buddha*, *Vinaya* I 24, 10—25, 37, where the same event is told first in prose and then again in *āryā*-verses. The

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[354] Any of a number of prose commentaries attached to the *Vedas*, the most ancient Hindu sacred literature, explaining the significance of the *Vedas* as used in the ritual sacrifices and the symbolic significance of the priests' actions. The *Brāhmaṇas* belong to the period 900—700 BCE, when the gathering of the sacred hymns into *Saṁhitās* ("collections") had acquired a position of sanctity. They present a digest of accumulated teachings, illustrated by myth and legend, on various matters of ritual and on hidden meanings of the sacred texts. Their principal concern is with the sacrifice, and they are the oldest extant sources for the history of Indian ritual. Appended to the *Brāhmaṇas* are chapters written in similar language and style, but with a more philosophic content, which specifically instruct that the matter of these chapters should be taught only in the forest, away from the village. These later works, called *Āraṇyakas* (literally, "belonging to the forest"), served as a link between the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Upanishads*. (This footnote is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

[355] Every *sutta* begins with the words: *Evaṁ me sutaṁ. Ekaṁ samayaṁ bhagavā ... viharati ...* "Thus have I heard. At one time, the *Buddha* … was staying (at) …"

whole paragraph was discussed in detail by L. Alsdorf (1904—1978), who drew attention to the fact that the use of the *āryā*-meter can be used for dating texts. For this particular meter was only in use in India, and not in Ceylon (Śri Lanka). Consequently, if the tradition that Mahinda brought texts from India to Ceylon is correct, this text must be older than about 250 BCE. At the same time, this sequence of prose and verse corresponds to a type of literature found in the *Jātakas*.

Besides material relating to Buddhist law, even the Theravādin *Vinaya* contains quite a few stories. In the course of the development of *Vinaya* texts, more and more stories were incorporated, so much so that, for example, *Cullavagga* VII. *Sanghabhedak-khandhaka* "chapter on splitting the Order (schism)," which comprises twenty-six printed pages in the Theravādin version has been expanded into more than five hundred pages in the Mūlasarvāstavādin *Vinaya*. Thus, the law texts became slowly overgrown with stories, to such an extent that there is almost a change of the literary genre, from law book to *Avadāna*.[356]

Both the *Vibhanga* and *Khandhaka* have a long history of development and mutual influence. The oldest part of the *Vibhanga*, the *Pātimokkha*, is separated by a considerable span of time from later ones, such as the *anāpatti*-formulas, which mention the *Abhidhamma* texts, and perhaps even script.

A preliminary model of the development of the *Vibhanga* and *Khandhaka* may be sketched as follows: First, the *Pātimokkha* was created by incorporating older, pre-Buddhist material, mostly by reformulating the rules, into the Buddhist material and by providing the framework necessary for recitation that is the introduction to the individual rules and the connecting texts between the groups of rules. Then, a Commentary on this text was developed, part of which survives in the *Mahāvagga*. Perhaps roughly contemporary is a first draft of the *Khandhaka*, possibly having only ten chapters,[357] by which the growing *Vibhanga* is influenced. Next to be developed were the introductory stories, which do not always understand the rules correctly. This points to a certain distance in time between these two parts of the *Vibhanga*. Here, it is important to note that there is no such misunderstanding in the *Khandhaka*, because the compiler(s)/ editor(s) could drop rules that were no longer understood, which was not possible in the fixed *Pātimokkha*. At this point, there may have been a revision of the *Khandhaka*, to which the highly technical and later (?) legal chapters were added and, thus, the number of twenty chapters was reached. The original introduction to the *Vibhanga* was replaced and brought into the *Mahāvagga*. Finally, the accounts of the Councils may have been

[356] Legendary material centering on the *Buddha's* explanations of events by a person's worthy deeds in a previous life. The Pāḷi cognate of the term is *Apadāna*. *Avadāna* designates both the class of such stories scattered within the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and separate collections based upon them. Among the latter is an important anthology of the Sarvāstivādin ("Doctrine That All Is Real") School given the modern title *Divyāvadāna* ("Divine *Avadāna*"), consisting of thirty-eight legends, including some about the great Buddhist emperor Aśoka (Pāḷi Asoka). The most famous and largest work classified as *Avadāna* is the *Mahāvastu* ("Great Story"), a compilation from the Mahāsaṅghika ("Great Community") School of ancient Buddhism of miraculous events in the life and former lives of the *Buddha* himself. (This footnote is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

[357] Cf. the *Daśadhyaya*- (perhaps rather *Daśabhāṇavāra*- ??) *Vinaya* of the Sarvāstavādins.

added as an appendix. In particular, the account of the Second Council may have originally belonged to a non-Theravādin tradition, although no actual split of the Theravādin tradition is mentioned therein. This seems to be indicated by the fact that the terminology used in the account differs from what is common in the Theravādin tradition: formulations such as *kappati ... singiloṇakappo* (*Vinaya* II 306, 13) are otherwise alien to the language of the Theravādin *Vinaya*, but are astonishingly close to the language of the Jain *Kappasutta*. Furthermore, the monks obviously do not understand all the key words, which are unknown or at least unfamiliar to them, with the exception of the last two: the Theravādin *Vinaya* experts have to ask for an explanation for eight out of the ten items.

Even if this first and very much conjectural outline of a possible development is, on the whole, not too far from the truth, it would be difficult to convert this relative into an absolute chronology. Only in very general terms might it be conjectured that most, if not all, of this happened before the *Vinaya* was brought to Śri Lanka, inasmuch as there are no hints concerning additions to the *Vibhanga* or *Khandhaka* that refer to the island.

Although other *Vinaya* schools possess appendices to their *Vinayas*, a handbook giving a systematic survey of law exists only in the Theravādin *Vinaya*. The *Parivāra* (*Vinaya* V) is a highly technical text that has been put together from parts originally quite independent from each other and that sometimes even repeat the discussion of some *Vinaya* problems. The text concentrates on legal matters, leaving aside all framework. At the end, the author, or perhaps editor, named Dīpa, is mentioned, who is not otherwise known. The translation of the title is not entirely clear, perhaps "appendix" comes the closest; it occurs in the text itself.

The *Parivāra* consists of nineteen chapters, but, in the Commentaries, it is called *soḷasaparivāra* "appendix of sixteen (chapters)." Further, some manuscripts state at the end of the fourteenth chapter that "the *Parivāra* has come to an end" (*Vinaya* V 179, 19). There is, indeed, a rather clear break in the *Parivāra* after this chapter, because XV. *Upālipañcaka* reads like a text from the *Khandhaka* beginning with *tena samayena ...*, (*Vinaya* V 180, 2). However, the structure of the *Parivāra* has never been investigated, and, therefore, the supposed original end of the text after XIV. *Kaṭhinabheda* remains an open question. In addition, there is no trace of a *Parivāra* with sixteen chapters. It is only in the phrases *mahāvibhange mahābhede soḷasa mahāvārā* (*Vinaya* V 53, 16) and *bhikkhunīvibhange soḷasa mahābhedā* (*Vinaya* V 84, 34), at the end of the first two chapters, that the number sixteen (*soḷasa*) occurs. In spite of the fact that we find *vāra* here and not *Parivāra*, it is possible that the text has been named after the first chapters.

As we have it, the *Parivāra* presupposes both the *Vibhanga* and the *Khandhaka*, from which it is totally different in style. The text begins with questions and answers without mentioning the *Buddha* or any other person. One of the questions, concerning the tradition of the *Vinaya*, is most important for the history of this text. A line of forty persons, beginning with the *Buddha* and Venerable Upāli, is mentioned, enumerating prominent *Vinaya* teachers (*Vinaya* V 2, 36—3, 30). The last in the line is Venerable Sīvatthera, who may have lived in the first century CE, and this is most probably the *terminus post quem* for the *Parivāra*.

Traditionally, there were three Theravādin fraternities in Anurādhapura[358] in Śri Lanka based in three monasteries, each of which once possessed texts of their own. When King Parakkhamabāhu I (1153—1186) reformed Buddhism in Śri Lanka during the twelfth century, the monks of the Abhayagirivihāra and Jetavanavihāra were reordained according to the Mahāvihāra tradition. Consequently, their texts gradually disappeared, and the only Theravādin texts surviving are those of one monastery, the Mahāvihāra.

It is known that the *Vinaya* of the Abhayagirivihāra differed from that of the Mahāvihāra, particularly the *Khandhaka* and *Parivāra*, as explicitly stated in the Commentary to the *Mahāvaṁsa*. Fortunately, this is corroborated by a single sentence from the Abhayagiri *Vinaya*, corresponding to *Vinaya* II 79, 21 = III 163, 1, quoted in the *Vinaya* Commentary, which shows that the wording was, indeed, slightly different.

Synopsis[359]

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* has three major divisions: (1) *Vibhanga,* (2) *Khandhaka*, and (3) *Parivāra*. The *Vibhanga* is further divided into two parts: (1) *Pārājikā* and (2) *Pācittiyā*. Likewise, the *Khandhaka* consists of two parts: (1) *Mahāvagga* and (2) *Cullavagga* (or *Cūḷavagga*). The *Parivāra* is a later addition — it summarizes the whole of the *Vinaya*.

1. *Pārājikā*	(Major Offenses)	}	*Vibhanga*
2. *Pācittiyā*	(Minor Offenses)		
3. *Mahāvagga*	(Greater Section)	}	*Khandhaka*
4. *Cullavagga*	(Lesser Section)		
5. *Parivāra*	(Epitome of the *Vinaya*)		

[358] Anurādhapura is a city located north-central Śri Lanka (Ceylon). It is situated along the Aruvi Aru River. The old section of Anurādhapura, now preserved as an archaeological park, is the best known of Śri Lanka's ancient ruined cities; in the immediate vicinity are huge bell-shaped *dagobas* (Buddhist commemorative shrines, or *stūpas*) built of small sun-dried bricks, as well as temples, sculptures, palaces, and ancient drinking-water reservoirs. The city also contains an ancient pipal tree that is believed to have originally been a branch of the *bodhi*-tree at Bodhgayā, under the shade of which the Ascetic Gotama attained Enlightenment. The *bodhi*-tree branch was planted at Anurādhapura about 245 BCE, and it may be the oldest tree in existence of which there is any historical record.

Anurādhapura was founded in the 5th century BCE and was the Sinhalese capital of Śri Lanka from the 4th century BCE until the 11th century CE, when invasions from South India forced the shifting of the capital. The city was abandoned and overrun by jungle; in the 19th century, it was rediscovered by the British, and it became a Buddhist pilgrimage center. The revival of the city began in earnest in the 1870s. The contemporary city, much of which was moved during the mid-20th century to preserve the site of the ancient capital, is a major road junction of northern Śri Lanka and lies along a railway line. The headquarters of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon is in Anurādhapura. Population (1990 est.): 37,000. (This footnote is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

[359] This synopsis is adapted from Russell Webb (editor), *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon* (Wheel publication no. 217/220) (second edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1991]).

As noted above, the *Vibhanga* enumerates the 227 disciplinary rules (*Pātimokkha*) for *Bhikkhus*. These rules are arranged into eight categories:

1. Four rules leading to expulsion from the Order if broken (*pārājikā*):
   a. Sexual intercourse;
   b. Theft;
   c. Taking a human life or inducing another to commit suicide;
   d. Falsely boasting of supernormal powers.
2. Thirteen rules dealing with initial and subsequent meetings of the *Sangha* (*sanghādisesā*);
3. Two indefinite rules (*aniyatā*);
4. Thirty rules dealing with expiation and forfeiture (*nissaggiyā pācittiyā*);
5. Ninety-two rules dealing with expiation (*pācittiyā*);
6. Four rules requiring confession (*pāṭidesanīyā*);
7. Seventy-five rules dealing with etiquette and decorum (*sekhiyā*);
8. Seven rules for the settlement of legal processes (*adhikaraṇasamathā*).

These rules are followed by those for *Bhikkhunīs* (*Bhikkhunī Vibhanga*).

The *Khandhaka* is divided into the *Mahāvagga* (Greater Section) and the *Cullavagga* (Lesser Section — this is also called the *Cūḷavagga*):

I. *Mahāvagga*:

1. Rules for admission to the Order;
2. The *uposatha*[360] meeting and the reciting of the *Pātimokkha*[361] (Disciplinary Rules);
3. Retreat during the rainy season (*vassāna*);
4. Ceremony concluding the rainy season retreat (*pavāraṇā*);
5. Rules regarding articles of dress and furniture;
6. The procedures for the annual making and distribution of robes (*kaṭhina*);
7. Rules regarding sick *Bhikkhus*, sleeping, and robe material;
8. The way of conducting meetings by the Order;
9. Proceedings in case of schism.

II. *Cullavagga* (*Cūḷavagga*):

1. Rules for dealing with offences that are brought before the Order;

[360] Literally, "fasting," that is, "fasting day," is the full-moon day, the new-moon day, and the two days of the first and last moon quarters. On full-moon and new-moon days, the Disciplinary Code (*Pātimokkha*) is read before the assembled community (*Sangha*) of monks (*Bhikkhus*), while on the four *uposatha* days, many lay devotees go to visit the monasteries, taking upon themselves the observance of the eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 219.

[361] Sanskrit *prāṭimokṣa*.

2. Procedures for putting a *Bhikkhu* on probation;
3. Rules for dealing with the accumulation of offences by a *Bhikkhu*;
4. Rules for settling legal procedures in the Order;
5. Miscellaneous rules for bathing, dress, etc.;
6. Dwellings, furniture, lodging, etc.;
7. Schisms;
8. Different classes of *Bhikkhus* and the duties of teachers and novices (*sāmaṇeras*);
9. Exclusion from the *Pātimokkha*;
10. The ordination and instruction of *Bhikkhunīs*;
11. Account of the First Council at Rājagaha;
12. Account of the Second Council at Vesālī.

The last division is the *Parivāra*, which summarizes and classifies the *Vinaya* rules for instruction and examination purposes.

Sutta Piṭaka

The *Sutta Piṭaka* consists chiefly of instructive discourses delivered by the *Buddha* to both the *Sangha* and the laity on various occasions. A few discourses expounded by Venerable Sāriputta, Venerable Moggallāna, and Venerable Ānanda are incorporated and are accorded as much veneration as the Word of the *Buddha* Himself, since they were approved by Him. Most of the discourses were intended for the benefit of *Bhikkhus*, and they deal with the Holy Life and with the exposition of the Doctrine. There are several other discourses that deal with both the material and moral progress of lay followers. The Sigālovāda Sutta,[362] for instance, deals mainly with the duties of a lay person. There are also a few interesting discourses delivered to children.

The *Sutta Piṭaka* may be compared with a book of prescriptions, since the discourses were expounded on diverse occasions to suit the temperaments of various persons. There may be seemingly contradictory statements in some of the discourses, but they should not be misconstrued, inasmuch as they were uttered by the *Buddha* to suit a particular purpose; for instance, when asked the same question by different people on different occasions, He would either maintain silence when the inquirer was merely foolishly inquisitive, or He would give a detailed reply when He knew that the inquirer was an earnest seeker after the Truth, and He would tailor the reply to fit the intellectual ability and spiritual awareness of the inquirer.

The *Sutta Piṭaka* consists of the following five *Nikāyas* (Collections):[363]

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[362] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Pāṭikavagga, Sigālovāda Sutta, no. 31.

[363] The descriptions of the works that make up the *Sutta Piṭaka* are taken, in part, from Sangharakshita, *The Eternal Legacy: An Introduction to the Canonical Literature of Buddhism* (London: Tharpa [1985]) and, in part, from Russell Webb (editor), *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon* (Wheel publication no. 217/220) (second edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1991]). The following works have also been consulted: Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de

1. *Dīgha Nikāya* (Long Discourses)
2. *Majjhima Nikāya* (Middle-length Discourses)
3. *Saṁyutta Nikāya* (Kindred Sayings)
4. *Anguttara Nikāya* (Numerical Sayings)
5. *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Smaller Collection)

Dīgha Nikāya

Overview

The *Dīgha Nikāya* (Long Discourses), which contains some of the oldest records of the historical *Buddha's* (The Buddha Sākyamuni[364]) original teachings, given in India some 2,600 years ago, consists of 34 longer-length *suttas*, or discourses, arranged in three sections (*vagga*): (1) *Sīlakkhandha Vagga*; (2) *Mahā Vagga*; and (3) *Pāṭika Vagga*. Each discourse deals, at considerable length and in great detail, with one or more than one aspect of the Teaching.

The *suttas* contained in the *Dīgha Nikāya* reveal the gentleness, compassion, power, and penetrating wisdom of the *Buddha*. Included are teachings on mindfulness (Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, no. 22); on morality, concentration, and wisdom (Subha Sutta, no. 10); on Dependent Origination (Mahānidāna Sutta, no. 15); on the roots and causes of wrong views (Brahmajāla Sutta, no. 1); and a long description of the *Buddha's* last days and passing away (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, no. 16). Moreover, a wealth of practical advice and insight is included for all those traveling along the spiritual path.

Textual Analysis[365]

The beginning of each *sutta* is the same: *Evaṁ me sutaṁ. Ekaṁ samayaṁ bhagavā ... viharati ...* "Thus have I heard. At one time, the *Buddha* … was staying (at) …" The next sentence usually names the principal interlocutor of the *Buddha*.[366] This introduction has been discussed at length in the Commentaries on the Pāḷi Canon and frequently again in modern times.

Gruyter [2000]); Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [hardcover edition 1995]); Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [second edition 2001]); Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Saṁyutta Nikāya* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2000]); Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: An Anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikāya* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press [1999]).

[364] Literally, "Sage of the Sākyas," "Sage of the Sākya Clan."

[365] This section is adapted from Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 26—32.

[366] This is the *nidāna* (occasion) and the *puggala* (person).

The same beginning is found in all the *Nikāyas*, with an interesting exception in the *Itivuttaka*.

The end of each *sutta* is formalized as well, though not as strictly as the opening: "thus spoke the *Buddha* [or a monk such as Sāriputta, etc.]. Delighted, the monks [or the person addressed] approved what the *Buddha* had said." This formula occurs sixteen times in the *Dīgha Nikāya* and about a hundred times in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, while the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* and *Anguttara Nikāya* are quite different. Other concluding formulas will not be discussed here. Still, it may be noted that sometimes the title of the *sutta* is given, for example, as Brahmajāla or Ambaṭṭha, never as Brahmajāla Sutta or Ambaṭṭha Sutta, etc., and that these discourses are called *veyyākaraṇa* "explanation," and again not *suttanta* "discourse, *sutta*."

The end of the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta is quite unique, which is an unusual text in many other ways as well: *evaṁ etaṁ bhūtapubban ti* "thus it was in former times."

The middle part of each *sutta* is usually a highly formalized dialogue, though it attempts to preserve the actual situation in which the *sutta* was spoken. In contrast to a modern author, however, who might imitate an actual conversation by creating a fictitious oralist, the true oral nature found in early Buddhist texts avoids the natural style of a typical conversation, a situation that resulted from the need to create a formalized text that could be easily remembered and handed down by the tradition. In this respect, the remembered and true oral nature of the early Buddhists is ultimately more artificial than the fictitious orality in a modern novel.

More than half of the dialogues in the *Dīgha Nikāya* are debates with Brahmins or with members of other sects roughly contemporaneous with early Buddhism, and, consequently, they contain much, sometimes nearly the only surviving, information on these sects. Debates of this kind were popular in ancient India long before Buddhism arose and are well known from Vedic literature, though the early Buddhists developed and perfected them.

Debates are concentrated at the beginning of the *Dīgha Nikāya*; all thirteen *suttas* of the *Sīlakkhandha Vagga* belong to this category. Here, it is interesting to note that *sutta* no. 2, Sāmaññaphala Sutta (The Fruits of the Homeless Life), consists of two parts, the second part being repeated no less than four times in other *suttas* in debates with four different persons and at four different locations (no. 6, Mahāli Sutta, at Vesālī; no. 7, Jāliya Sutta, at Kosambī; no. 10, Subha Sutta, at Sāvatthī; and no. 12, Lohicca Sutta, at Kosala). This raises the question of why a certain place name occurs in a certain *sutta*. One might try to find an answer starting from the mythological *sutta* no. 21, Sakkapañha Sutta (Sakka's Questions [A God Consults the *Buddha*]), in which the *Buddha* answers the questions of the god Sakka (Indra) in a cave called Indasālā. The location of this cave is described very precisely. This points to a local tradition preserved in place names. Perhaps, they were not originally really meant to point to the place where a certain discourse was given, but rather to the place where the text was handed down. If this is true, then it makes sense to have four local traditions preserved in these four *Dīgha Nikāya suttas* and incorporated into the *Dīgha Nikāya* as a supra-regional collection to please the respective Buddhist communities. A similar idea was put forth long ago by F.

L. Woodward (1871—1951), who observed that Sāvatthī is mentioned in no less than 736 *suttas* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, which, according to Woodward, might have been compiled there.

It is further interesting to note that, in contrast to the regularly mentioned place name, no time of day is given regarding when the *suttas* were spoken. Only in the Commentaries is a sort of chronology invented.

Another question that cannot at present be answered concerns the idea behind the collections preserved in the *Nikāyas*. Moreover, there seems to be hardly any information in the ancient texts about the actual use made of them. Occasionally, recitations are mentioned in the *Mahāvaṁsa*.

For the *Vinaya*, the answer is easy: Rules were needed to run the Buddhist *Sangha*. The *Nikāyas*, on the other hand, are a compendium of the Teachings, compiled so that the Teachings could be preserved and so that monks and nuns could learn about and defend the Buddhist positions, as is said in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* (IV138, 5—9): "if, monks, other ascetics should ask you … you should know the answer." Furthermore, the debates in the *Dīgha Nikāya* seem to have been used to convince non-Buddhists of the superiority of the Buddhist position, since that is to whom they are outwardly directed. It is, however, not unlikely that the content of these debates was soon outdated, once the non-Buddhists had been defeated and Buddhism had established itself. Then, the debates may have served as a kind of model for discussions. The texts in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, on the other hand, which contain instructions for monks and nuns, may have had a more lasting value.

While the first *vagga* (section) of the *Dīgha Nikāya* is characterized by debates, the second *vagga* contains texts (some legendary) relating to the life of the *Buddha*. In *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 14, Mahāpadāna Sutta (The Great Discourse on the Lineage), the lives of the six predecessors of the historical *Buddha* are described. The life story of the sixth, Vipassin, is related at length and serves as the model for the latest *Buddha*, the Buddha Gotama.

Dīgha Nikāya no. 15, Mahānidāna Sutta (The Great Discourse on Origination), discusses important points of the *Dhamma* such as *paṭicca samuppāda* (Dependent Origination).

The most prominent text in the *Dīgha Nikāya* is no. 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (The Great Passing [The *Buddha's* Last Days]). This text forms a unit with *sutta* no. 17, Mahāsudassana Sutta (The Great King of Glory), which relates the legend of Kusinārā, the place where the *Buddha* passed away. Taken together, both texts comprise about 120 printed pages. If *sutta* collections such as the *Itivuttaka* or *Udāna* (both books of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*) are compared, this could easily have been a separate unit of the *Tipiṭaka*. According to Frauwallner, its original place would then have been at the end of the *Vinaya*.

The account of the last days of the *Buddha*, His food poisoning, His passing away at Kusinārā, and the distribution of His relics, is, indeed, the first really long literary composition extant in ancient India. Although *Brāhmaṇas* as such are, of course, much longer, they are compiled from small, separate, and independent pieces, while the Mahā-

parinibbāna Sutta is built according to a uniform plan. The structure of the text shows how the compiler(s) had to struggle with such an unusually long text. Time and again, they are at the point of losing their thread, for example, when the *Buddha* explains the eight reasons for an earthquake to Venerable Ānanda, which makes good sense in the context, other groups of eight from the *Anguttara Nikāya* follow suit, which have no relation at all to the context. At the same time, this shows how pieces of text known by heart may intrude into any context once there is a corresponding key word. This so-called "uncontrolled orality" created those small sections — "incongruous" or "out-of-place" sub-texts ("Sondertexte" in German) — that are embedded in larger texts.

A most unusual text is *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 21, Sakkapañha Sutta (Sakka's Questions [A God Consults the *Buddha*]). Before he himself dares to see the *Buddha* at the Indasālā cave, the god Sakka sends the *gandhabba*[367] Pañcasika to serenade the *Buddha* with a song, which, indeed, is a love song. Here, a very rare literary genre has been preserved in a most unusual context.

Much attention has been paid by modern scholars to *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 27, Aggañña Sutta (On Knowledge of Beginnings), because it contains important information on the caste system and on cosmology.

The last five *suttas* are different from all others in the *Dīgha Nikāya* in one way or another. No. 30, Lakkhaṇa Sutta (The Marks of a Great Man), contains verses in various metres, hardly known otherwise. No. 31, Sigālovāda Sutta (To Sigālovāda [Advice to Lay People]), treats ethics for lay people and is called *gihivinaya* "*Vinaya* for householders." The instructions are given in the form of questions and answers, and may have been a kind of manual for teaching lay people. It is one of the texts that has gained some importance in "Buddhist modernism." No. 32, Āṭānāṭiya Sutta (The Āṭānāṭā Protective Verses), is not really a *sutta* but a "protection text" (*paritta*). It also is part of a collection of twenty-two *paritta* texts. The last two *suttas*, no. 33, Sangīti Sutta (The Chanting Together), and no. 34, Dasuttara Sutta (Expanding Decades), are arranged according to the number of items treated, a principle well known from the *Anguttara Nikāya*. Both discourses are delivered by Venerable Sāriputta. At the beginning of no. 33, the "recitation text," it is stated that the Jain leader Niganṭha Nātaputta has died without properly instructing his community of followers. To avoid a similar situation among Buddhists, Venerable Sāriputta suggests a joint recitation of the *Dhamma* before the *Buddha*, who then approves what has been recited. This strongly recalls the next to last chapter of the *Khandhaka* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the account of the First Council.

It seems that the last two *suttas* are secondary additions to the *Dīgha Nikāya*. One might even conjecture that the original length of the *Dīgha Nikāya* was three times ten *suttas* — thirty in all —, just as that of the *Khandhaka* in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* was twenty chapters, or two (*Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga*/*Cūḷavagga*) times ten.

[367] Here, the term *gandhabba* refers to a heavenly musician. It should not be confused with the *gandhabba* (also spelled *gantabba*) that refers to a suitable being ready to be born in a particular womb. In this sense, the term is used only in this specific connection and is not to be mistaken for a permanent soul.

Synopsis:[368]

1. Sīlakkhandha Vagga

1. Brahmajāla Sutta (The Net of Brahmā): This *sutta* discusses the "perfect net" in which sixty-two heretical forms of speculation concerning the world and the self taught by other teachers of the time are caught.
2. Sāmaññaphala Sutta (The Fruits of the Homeless Life): The *Buddha* explains to King Ajatāsattu the advantages of joining the Buddhist Orders and renouncing the worldly life.
3. Ambaṭṭha Sutta (Pride of Birth and Its Fall): This *sutta* contains a dialogue between the *Buddha* and Ambaṭṭha on caste. It contains a reference to the legend of King Okkāka, the traditional founder of the Sākya clan.
4. Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta (Qualities of a True Brahmin): This *sutta* contains a dialogue with the Brahmin Soṇadaṇḍa on the characteristics of a true Brahmin.
5. Kūṭadanta Sutta (A Bloodless Sacrifice): This *sutta* contains a dialogue with the Brahmin Kūṭadanta condemning animal sacrifice.
6. Mahāli Sutta (Heavenly Sights, Soul, and Body): This *sutta* contains a dialogue with Mahāli on *deva*-like vision and hearing and the attainment of full Enlightenment.
7. Jāliya Sutta (About Jāliya): This *sutta* deals with the nature of the life-principle as compared with the body. This *sutta* repeats the last part of the Mahāli Sutta (no. 6).
8. Kassapasīhanāda Sutta (The Great Lion's Roar; also called "The Lion's Roar to Kassapa"): In this *sutta*, the naked ascetic Kassapa asks if it is true that the *Buddha* condemns all forms of austerity. The *Buddha* denies this, saying that one must distinguish between the different forms. Kassapa gives a list of standard practices, and the *Buddha* says that one may do any of these things, but, if one's morality, heart, and wisdom are not developed, one is still far from being an ascetic or a Brahmin (in the true sense of the term). The *Buddha* himself has practiced all possible austerities to perfection, and morality and wisdom as well and points out the futility of self-mortification. Thereupon, Kassapa requests ordination, and soon, through diligent practice, he becomes an *Arahant*.
9. Poṭṭhapāda Sutta (States of Consciousness): This *sutta* contains a discussion with Poṭṭhapāda on the nature of the soul, in which the *Buddha* states that the question is irrelevant and not conducive to Enlightenment.
10. Subha Sutta (Morality, Concentration, Wisdom): This *sutta* contains a discourse, attributed to Venerable Ānanda, on morality, concentration, and wisdom.
11. Kevaddha Sutta (What Brahmā Did Not Know): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* refuses to allow a *Bhikkhu* to perform a miracle. The *Buddha* tells the story of a monk who

[368] Most of the descriptions in this synopsis are adapted from Russell Webb (editor), *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon* (Wheel publication no. 217/220) (second edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1991]), pp. 4—7. However, several are adapted instead from Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [hardcover edition 1995]); first published in 1987 in paperback under the title *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications), pp. 55—62. Several are combinations from both sources.

visited the *devas* (celestial beings) to question them about where the four great elements cease without remainder. No one there could answer him — not even the Great Brahmā, who referred him back to the *Buddha* for an answer.

12. Lohicca Sutta (Good and Bad Teachers): This *sutta* contains a dialogue with the Brahmin Lohicca on the ethics of teaching.
13. Tevijja Sutta (The Threefold Knowledge [The Way to Brahmā]): This *sutta* deals with the futility of a knowledge of the Vedas as a means to attaining companionship with Brahmā.

2. Mahā Vagga

14. Mahāpadāna Sutta (The Great Discourse on the Lineage): This *sutta* contains the sublime story of the Buddha Gotama and His six predecessors. It also contains a discourse on the Buddha Vipassī, from his descent from the Tusita heaven to the commencement of his mission.
15. Mahānidāna Sutta (The Great Discourse on Origination): This *sutta* deals with the chain of causation and theories of the soul.
16. Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (The Great Passing [The *Buddha's* Last Days]): This is the Great Discourse that records the last days of the *Tathāgata* and of His passing into *parinibbāna*.
17. Mahāsudassana Sutta (The Great King of Glory): This *sutta* relates the story of a previous existence of the *Buddha* as King Sudassana, told by the *Buddha* on His death-bed.
18. Janavasabha Sutta (Brahmā Addresses the Gods): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* relates the story of the *yakkha* (a demon [of the good variety]) Janavasabha to the people of Nādikā.
19. Mahāgovinda Sutta (The Great Steward [A Past Life of Gotama]): In this *sutta*, the heavenly musician Pañcasikha relates the story of Mahāgovinda to the *Buddha*, who states that He Himself was Mahāgovinda.
20. Mahāsamaya Sutta (The Mighty Gathering [*Devas* Come to See the *Buddha*]): This *sutta* discusses the *devas* of the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*) and their evolution. This *sutta* is almost exclusively in verse and gives much mythological lore.
21. Sakkapañha Sutta (Sakka's Questions [A God Consults the *Buddha*]): Sakka, lord of *devas*, visits the *Buddha* and learns from Him that everything that originates is subject also to dissolution.
22. Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness): This is considered by many to be the most important discourse in the Pāḷi Canon. This *sutta* is very different in character from those that immediately precede it. It recurs word for word, less verses 18—21, as *sutta* no. 10 in the *Majjhima Nikāya*. The "one way" for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and distress, for the gaining of *nibbāna*, is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*sati-paṭṭhāna*): mindfulness of (1) body, (2) feelings, (3) mind, and (4) mental objects. Detailed instructions are given for mindful awareness of breathing and so on. Thus,

under mind-objects, we read, for example: "If sensual desire is present in himself, a monk knows that it is present. If sensual desire is absent in himself, a monk knows that it is absent. Moreover, he knows how unarisen sensual desire comes to arise, he knows how the abandonment of arisen sensual desire comes about, and he knows how the non-arising of the abandoned sensual desire in the future will come about." (According to the Commentary, "monk" here means anyone who does the practice.) The *sutta* ends with an account of the Four Noble Truths.

23. Pāyāsi Sutta (About Pāyāsi [Debate with a Skeptic]): In this *sutta*, Venerable Kumāra-Kassapa converts Prince Pāyāsi from the wrong view that there is no future life or reward for actions.

3. Pāṭika Vagga

24. Pāṭika Sutta (About Pāṭikaputta [The Charlatan]): This *sutta* relates the story of the dim-witted disciple Sunakkhata who leaves the *Buddha* to follow other teachers because the *Buddha* does not work miracles or teach the origin of things.
25. Udumbarika-Sīhanāda Sutta (The Lion's Roar to the Udumbarikans): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* discusses asceticism with the ascetic Nigrodha.
26. Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda Sutta (The Lion's Roar on the Turning of the Wheel): This *sutta* relates the story of the universal king, the corruption of morals and their restoration, and the coming of the future Buddha Metteyya.
27. Aggañña Sutta (On Knowledge of Beginnings): This *sutta* contains a discussion on caste and an exposition on the origin of things (as in *sutta* no. 24), down to the origin of the four castes.
28. Sampasādanīya Sutta (Serene Faith): This *sutta* contains a dialogue between the *Buddha* and Sāriputta, who describes the Teaching of the *Buddha* and asserts his faith in Him.
29. Pāsādika Sutta (The Delightful Discourse): This *sutta* contains a discussion of good and bad teachers, and why the *Buddha* has not revealed certain things.
30. Lakkhaṇa Sutta (The Marks of a Great Man): This *sutta* discusses the thirty-two marks of a Great Man.
31. Sigālovāda Sutta (To Sigālovāda [Advice to Lay People]): This *sutta* contains advice given by the *Buddha* to Sigālovāda on the duties of a householder to the six classes of persons.
32. Āṭānāṭiya Sutta (The Āṭānāṭā Protective Verses): This *sutta* contains a discussion of the Four Great Kings and their spells for protection against evil.
33. Saṅgīti Sutta (The Chanting Together): In this *sutta*, Venerable Sāriputta outlines the principles of the Teaching in ten numerical groups — lists of items for recitation.
34. Dasuttara Sutta (Expanding Decades): This *sutta* contains similar material to what is found in the preceding one (no. 33). Here, Venerable Sāriputta outlines the doctrine in tenfold series.

Majjhima Nikāya

Overview

The *Majjhima Nikāya* (Middle-length Discourses) contains 152 *suttas* arranged in fifteen sections (*vagga*), roughly classified according to subject matter. Though the difference between the *Majjhima Nikāya* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* is mainly one of length, the *suttas* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* being, on the whole, shorter than those of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *Majjhima Nikāya* contains a much larger number of *suttas* and an even greater variety of content.

Textual Analysis[369]

The *Majjhima Nikāya* is divided into three divisions, each of which contains fifty (*paññāsa* or *paṇṇāsa*) *suttas*: (1) *Mahā-paṇṇāsa* "great (division) of fifty (texts)": nos. 1—50; (2) *Majjhima-paṇṇāsa* "middle (division) of fifty (texts)": nos. 51—100; and (3) *Upari-paṇṇāsa* "further (division) of fifty (texts)": nos. 101—152. Each group of fifty is divided into groups of ten texts. Sometimes, *suttas* are grouped together in pairs called *Cūḷa-* and *Mahā-* "small" and "great" texts, respectively.

As in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, there is a text in the *Majjhima Nikāya* that is repeated four times, nos. 131—134: (1) no. 131, Bhaddekaratta Sutta, Sāvatthī; (2) no. 132, Ānanda-bhaddekarata Sutta, Sāvatthī; (3) no. 133, Mahākaccāna-bhaddekarata Sutta, Rājagaha; and (4) no. 134, Lomasakangiya-bhaddekarata Sutta, Kapilavatthu. The first *sutta* (no. 131) is delivered by the *Buddha* Himself in a way that is perhaps unique in the *Tipiṭaka*. At the beginning, four verses are recited and then explained: This is called *uddesa* "outline," followed by *vibhanga* "commentary," *Majjhima Nikāya* III, no. 187, 18, a literary form that is used frequently in later times. The second *sutta* (no. 132) is recited by Venerable Ānanda, with the *Buddha* approving, and, in the third *sutta* (no. 133), the *Buddha* recites only the verses and then has them explained by Mahākassapa, who is the monk who knows in full what the *Buddha* means. The last *sutta* (no. 134) is the same text repeated at Kapilavatthu. The *sutta* extols the fame of the deity Bhaddekaratta, who has heard of this text even in the Tāvattiṁsa Heaven and asks Lomasakangiya about it.

Some texts of the *Majjhima Nikāya* seem to be younger than those in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, when it is stated that the dialogue has taken place after the *parinibbāna* of the *Buddha* has taken place, such as *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 84, Madhura Sutta, or no. 94, Ghoṭamukha Sutta, where the legend about the foundation of the Ghoṭamukhī Hall in Pāṭaliputta is related in an appendix. Quite some time seems to have elapsed after the *parinibbāna* in no. 124, Bakkula Sutta, because Bakkula, who is considered to be the healthiest of all the monks, enters *parinibbāna* eighty years after becoming a member of the *Sangha*. It seems that he must have survived the *Buddha* by half a century, something

[369] This section is adapted from Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 32—35.

that has caught the attention of the commentator, who states that this *sutta* was recited only during the Second Council, that is, one hundred years after the *parinibbāna*. This remark is quite interesting for the history of the Theravādin scriptures, for it shows that, even in this tradition, later additions were admitted into the canon.

Other texts come, at times, very near to some sort of personal memory of the *Buddha*. *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 140, Dhātuvibhanga Sutta, tells of the novice Pukkusāti, who meets the *Buddha* by chance without knowing Him, because he received his lower ordination[370] from some other monk. Only after being taught by the *Buddha* Himself does he recognize Him and asks for the higher ordination (*upasampadā*), but, sadly, he dies before bowl and robe are at hand. Still the *Buddha* declares that Pukkusāti will enter *nibbāna* even without ever having become a fully ordained monk.

In *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 144, Channavāda Sutta, the seriously ill monk Channa tries to commit suicide, but Venerables Sāriputta and Mohācunda prevent him from doing so. The *Buddha*, however, does not object to the suicide, since only the craving for rebirth should be reprehended. Most interesting are those *suttas* relating personal memories of the *Buddha* Himself, such as *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 26, Ariyapariyesana Sutta, where the *Buddha* talks about His teachers Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta, or when the former fellow student of the *Buddha*, Bharaṇḍuka Kālāma, is mentioned in the *Tikanipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*. Further, *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, contains the famous episode of the *Bodhisatta* meditating as a child under a rose-apple tree (*jambu*). All these are elements form a "biography" of the *Buddha*, to which *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 123, Acchariyabbhutadhamma Sutta, must be added.

Occasionally, the *Majjhima Nikāya* also contains *Vinaya* material, such as *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 104, Sāmagāma Sutta, which refers to *Cullavagga* IV. *Samathak-khandhaka*, and *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 82, Raṭṭhapāla Sutta, the story of Raṭṭhapāla, whose parents tried in vain to prevent him from entering the *Sangha*.

The content of the *Majjhima Nikāya* shows a much greater variety of topics than does the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Only the great debates are absent in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, though discussions with those holding wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*) do occur, as, for example, in *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 56, Upāli Sutta, or no. 57, Kukkuravatika Sutta, where strange ascetic practices are described.

It has never really been investigated in detail what additional material can be found in the *Majjhima Nikāya* and how exactly both the *Majjhima Nikāya* and the *Dīgha Nikāya* relate to each other. Such an investigation would be of prime importance for finding out what purpose the respective texts may have been intended to serve. Several scholars have suggested that the *Majjhima Nikāya* may have been used to instruct new converts to Buddhism.

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[370] *Pabbajjā*, literally, "going forth," or, more fully stated, "going forth from home to the homeless life" of a monk. The ordination requires severing all family and social ties to live the pure life of a monk, in order to realize the goal of final deliverance pointed out by the *Buddha*. Thus, *pabbajjā* has become the name for admission as a *sāmaṇera*, or novice, that is, as a candidate for the Order of *Bhikkhus*. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 134.

Synopsis:[371]

Mahāpaṇṇāsa

1. Mūlapariyāya Vagga (The Division of the Discourse on the Root)

1. Mūlapariyāya Sutta (The Root of All Things): This *sutta* discusses how states of consciousness originate. The *Buddha* analyzes the cognitive processes of four types of individuals: (1) the untaught ordinary person; (2) the disciple in higher training; (3) the *Arahant*; and (4) the *Tathāgata*. This is one of the deepest and most difficult *suttas* in the Pāḷi Canon.
2. Sabbāsava Sutta (All the Taints): This *sutta* deals with the elimination of the taints (cankers) (*āsava*).
3. Dhammadāyāda Sutta (Heirs in *Dhamma*): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* exhorts the *Bhikkhus* to realize the importance of the *Dhamma* and the non-importance of their physical wants.
4. Bhayabherava Sutta (Fear and Dread): This *sutta* deals with braving the fears and terrors of the forest. It also presents an account of the *Buddha's* Enlightenment.
5. Anangaṇa Sutta (Without Blemishes): This *sutta* contains a dialogue between Venerables Sāriputta and Moggallāna on the attainment of freedom from depravity.
6. Ākankheyya Sutta (If a *Bhikkhu* Should Wish): This *sutta* deals with the things for which a *Bhikkhu* may wish. The *sutta* begins by stressing the importance of virtue as the foundation for a *Bhikkhu's* training; the *Buddha* then goes on to enumerate the benefits that a *Bhikkhu* can reap by properly fulfilling the training.
7. Vatthūpama Sutta (The Simile of the Cloth): This *sutta* contains the parable of the soiled cloth and the defiled mind.
8. Sallekha Sutta (Effacement): This *sutta* deals with the elimination of self (*attā*) and false views (*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*), as well as how to efface defilements (*kilesa*). The *Buddha* rejects the view that mere attainment of the *jhānas* (meditative absorptions) is effacement and explains how effacement is properly practiced in His Teaching.
9. Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta (Right View): This *sutta* is a discourse by Venerable Sāriputta on right views (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). This important discourse contains separate sections on the wholesome and the unwholesome, nutriment, the Four Noble Truths, the twelve factors of Dependent Origination, and the taints.
10. Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Foundations of Mindfulness): This *sutta* is the same as that found in the *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 22, but without the detailed explanation of the Four Noble Truths. This is one of the fullest and most important *suttas* by the *Buddha*, dealing with meditation, with particular emphasis on the development of insight. The *Buddha* begins by declaring the Four Foundations of Mindfulness to be the

[371] Most of the descriptions in this synopsis are adapted from Russell Webb (editor), *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon* (Wheel publication no. 217/220) (second edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1991]), pp. 8—20. However, several are adapted instead from Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [second edition 2001]), pp. 61—75. Several are combinations from both sources.

direct path for the realization of *nibbāna*, then gives detailed instructions on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness: the contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and mind-objects.

2. Sīhanāda Vagga (The Division on the Lion's Roar)

11. Cūḷasīhanāda Sutta (The Shorter Discourse on the Lion's Roar): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* declares that only in His Dispensation can the Four Stages of Sainthood be found, explaining how His Teaching can be distinguished from other creeds through its unique rejection of all doctrines of self.
12. Mahāsīhanāda Sutta (The Longer Discourse on the Lion's Roar): Here, the *Buddha* expounds the ten powers of a *Tathāgata*, His four kinds of intrepidity, and other superior qualities, which entitle Him to "roar the lion's roar in the assemblies."
13. Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Mass of Suffering): In this discourse, the *Buddha* explains the full understanding of sensual pleasures, material form, and feelings. There is a long section on the dangers inherent in sensual pleasures.
14. Cūḷadukkhakkhandha Sutta (The Shorter Discourse on the Mass of Suffering): This *sutta* is a variation on the preceding one, ending in a discussion with Jain ascetics on the nature of pleasure and pain.
15. Anumāna Sutta (Inference): This *sutta* was delivered by Venerable Moggallāna. It deals with the value of introspection. (There is no reference to the *Buddha* anywhere in this *sutta*.)
16. Cetokhila Sutta (The Wilderness in the Heart): Here, the *Buddha* explains the "five wildernesses in the heart" and the five "shackles in the heart."
17. Vanapattha Sutta (Jungle Thickets): This *sutta* deals with the advantages and disadvantages of the forest life.
18. Madhupiṇḍika Sutta (The Honeyball): Here, the *Buddha* gives a brief outline of His Teaching, which Venerable Kaccāna elaborates.
19. Dvedhāvitakka Sutta (Two Kinds of Thoughts): This *sutta* discusses the parable of sensuality. There is also a repetition of the account of the Enlightenment of the *Buddha* as in the Bhayabherava Sutta (*Majjhima Nikāya* no. 4).
20. Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta (The Removal of Distracting Thoughts): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* presents methods of meditation to dispel undesirable thoughts.

3. Tatiya Vagga (The Third Division)

21. Kakacūpama Sutta (The Simile of the Saw): This *sutta* focuses on the need to control feelings and the mind under the most severe provocation.
22. Alagaddūpama Sutta (The Simile of the Snake): This *sutta* presents the simile of the water-snake. Holding wrong views of the *Dhamma* is like seizing a snake by the tail.

23. Vammika Sutta (The Ant-Hill): In this *sutta*, a deity presents a *Bhikkhu* with an obscure riddle. The *Buddha* unravels the riddle for the *Bhikkhu*. This *sutta* contains the simile of the smouldering ant-hill (*vammika*[372]) as the human body.
24. Rathavinīta Sutta (The Relay Chariots): In this *sutta*, Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāṇiputta explains to Venerable Sāriputta that the goal of the Holy Life, final *nibbāna*, is to be reached by means of the Seven Stages of Purification.
25. Nivāpa Sutta (The Bait): Here, the *Buddha* explains the parable of Māra as a sower or hunter laying traps for deer.
26. Ariyapariyesana Sutta (The Noble Quest): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* recounts His renunciation, search, and attainment of Enlightenment.
27. Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta (The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint): This is the shorter version of the "elephant's footprint" simile on the step-by-step training of a *Bhikkhu*.
28. Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta (The Longer Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint): This is the longer version of the "elephant's footprint" simile on the Four Noble Truths expounded by Venerable Sāriputta.
29. Mahāsāropama Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood): This *sutta* deals with the danger of gain, honor, and fame. This *sutta* is said to have been delivered when Devadatta left the Order.
30. Cūḷasāropama Sutta (The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood): The preceding *sutta* is further developed here. Both *suttas* emphasize that the goal of the Holy Life is the unshakable liberation of the mind — everything else is secondary.

4. Mahāyamaka Vagga (The Greater Division of Pairs)

31. Cūḷagosinga Sutta (The Shorter Discourse in Gosinga): This *sutta* contains a conversation between the *Buddha* and three *Bhikkhus*, who speak on harmonious living and relate their attainments to Him.
32. Mahāgosinga Sutta (The Greater Discourse in Gosinga): Here, six *Bhikkhus* discuss what kind of monk makes the forest beautiful.
33. Mahāgopālaka Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Cowherd): This *sutta* relates the eleven bad and good qualities of a herdsman and a monk.
34. Cūḷagopālaka Sutta (The Shorter Discourse on the Cowherd): This *sutta* presents the simile of the foolish and wise herdsman crossing the river.
35. Cūḷasaccaka Sutta (The Shorter Discourse to Saccaka): This *sutta* contains a debate between the *Buddha* and Saccaka on the nature of the Five Aggregates and other topics.
36. Mahāsaccaka Sutta (The Greater Discourse to Saccaka): This *sutta* contains an account of the *Buddha's* asceticism and Enlightenment, with instructions on right meditation.

[372] Also spelled *vammīka*. The Sanskrit (Vedic) form is *valmīka*.

37. Cūḷataṇhāsankhaya Sutta (The Shorter Discourse on the Destruction of Craving): Here, Sakka asks the *Buddha* about freedom from craving and satisfactorily repeats His reply to Venerable Moggallāna.
38. Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Destruction of Craving): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* refutes the wrong view of a *Bhikkhu* who thinks that it is consciousness that transmigrates.
39. Mahā-Assapura Sutta (The Greater Discourse at Assapura): Here, the *Buddha* elucidates "things that make one a recluse," with a discourse covering many aspects of a *Bhikkhu's* training.
40. Cūḷa-Assapura Sutta (The Shorter Discourse at Assapura): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains "the way proper to the recluse" not to be the mere outward practice of austerities but the inward purification from defilements.

5. Cūḷayamaka Vagga (The Shorter Division of Pairs)

41. Sāleyyaka Sutta (The Brahmins of Sālā): This *sutta* contains a discourse by the *Buddha* to the Brahmins of Sālā on why some beings go to celestial realms and why others go to woeful states after death.
42. Verañjaka Sutta (The Brahmins of Verañja): This *sutta* is the same as the preceding one repeated to the Brahmins of Verañja.
43. Mahāvedalla Sutta (The Greater Series of Questions and Answers): This *sutta* is a psychological discourse delivered by Venerable Sāriputta to Mahākoṭṭhita.
44. Cūḷavedalla Sutta (The Shorter Series of Questions and Answers): This *sutta* is also a psychological discourse delivered by the Bhikkhunī Dhammadinnā to the lay devotee Visākha.
45. Cūḷadhammasamādāna Sutta (The Shorter Discourse on the Ways of Undertaking Things): Here, the *Buddha* explains, differently from the following discourse, four ways of undertaking things, distinguished according to whether they are painful or pleasant now and whether they ripen into pleasure or pain in the future — in other words, the results of good and bad conduct.
46. Mahādhammasamādāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Ways of Undertaking Things): Here, the *Buddha* explains, differently from the preceding discourse, four ways of undertaking things, distinguished according to whether they are painful or pleasant now and whether they ripen into pleasure or pain in the future — in other words, the results of good and bad conduct.
47. Vīmaṁsaka Sutta (The Inquirer): In this *sutta,* the *Buddha* invites the *Bhikkhus* to make a thorough investigation of Himself in order to determine whether or not He can be accepted as fully Enlightened.
48. Kosambiya Sutta (The Kosambians): This *sutta* contains a discourse to the *Bhikkhus* of Kosambī on the evil of quarrelling.
49. Brahmanimantanika Sutta (The Invitation of a Brahmā): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* dissuades the Brahmā Baka from the wrong view of permanency.

50. Māratajjaniya Sutta (The Rebuke to Māra): In this *sutta*, Venerable Moggallāna warns Māra about the dangers in creating trouble for a disciple of the *Buddha*.

Majjhimapaṇṇāsa

6. Gahapati Vagga (The Division on Householders)

51. Kandaraka Sutta (To Kandaraka): This *sutta* contains a discourse on the four kinds of personality and on the steps to liberation.
52. Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta (The Man from Aṭṭhakanāgara): This *sutta* contains a discourse by Venerable Ānanda on the ways to attain *nibbāna*.
53. Sekha Sutta (The Disciple in Higher Training): Here, the *Buddha* opens a new meeting hall at Kapilavatthu. At the *Buddha's* request, Venerable Ānanda delivers a discourse on the practices undertaken by a disciple in higher training.
54. Potaliya Sutta (To Potaliya): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains to Potaliya the real significance of the abandonment of wordliness. This *sutta* contains a striking series of similes on the dangers in sensual pleasures.
55. Jīvaka Sutta (To Jīvaka): Here, the *Buddha* explains the rules He has promulgated concerning meat-eating and defends His disciples against unjust accusations.
56. Upāli Sutta (To Upāli): This *sutta* contains an account of the conversion of Upāli the millionaire from Jainism.
57. Kukkuravatika Sutta (The Dog-Duty Ascetic): This *sutta* contains a dialogue between the *Buddha* and two ascetics, one of whom imitates the behavior of a dog, and the other of whom imitates the behavior of an ox. The *Buddha* advises them on the futility of their practices and gives them a discourse on *kamma* and its fruit.
58. Abhayarājakumāra Sutta (To Prince Abhaya): The Jain leader, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, sends Prince Abhaya to question the *Buddha* on the condemnation of Devadatta.
59. Bahuvedanīya Sutta (The Many Kinds of Feeling): This *sutta* deals with the different classifications of feelings and the gradation of pleasures.
60. Apaṇṇaka Sutta (The Incontrovertible Teaching): Here, the *Buddha* gives a group of Brahmin householders an "incontrovertible teaching" that will help them steer clear of the tangle in contentious views.

7. Bhikkhu Vagga (The Division on *Bhikkhus*)

61. Ambalaṭṭhikā-Rāhulovāda Sutta (Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhikā): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* admonishes His son, the novice Rāhula, on the dangers of lying and stresses the importance of constant reflection on one's motives.
62. Mahārāhulovāda Sutta (The Greater Discourse of Advice to Rāhula): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* teaches Venerable Rāhula the meditation on the elements, the meditation on mindfulness of breathing, and other topics.
63. Cūḷamālunkya Sutta (The Shorter Discourse to Mālunkyāputta): This is the famous discourse in which Venerable Mālunkyāputta threatens to leave the Order unless the *Buddha* answers certain metaphysical questions. Using the simile of the man struck

by a poisoned arrow, the *Buddha* makes clear exactly what He does and does not teach.

64. Mahāmālunkya Sutta (The Greater Discourse to Mālunkyāputta): Here, the *Buddha* teaches the path to abandoning the five lower fetters.
65. Bhaddāli Sutta (To Bhaddāli): This *sutta* contains the story of Bhaddāli's confession and the *Buddha's* counsel.
66. Laṭukikopama Sutta (The Simile of the Quail): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* stresses the importance of abandoning all fetters, no matter how harmless and trifling they may seem.
67. Cātumā Sutta (At Cātumā): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* instructs a group of newly-ordained *Bhikkhus* concerning four dangers to be overcome by those who have gone forth into the homeless life.
68. Naḷakapāna Sutta (At Naḷakapāna): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* questions Venerable Anuruddha concerning certain points of the *Dhamma*. He also explains why, when His disciples die, He declares their level of attainment and plane of rebirth.
69. Gulissāni Sutta (Gulissāni): Here, Venerable Sāriputta delivers a discourse on the rules to be followed by those who, like Venerable Gulissāni, dwell in the forest.
70. Kīṭāgiri Sutta (At Kīṭāgiri): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* reprimands a group of disobedient monks. In the course of the discussion, He presents an important seven-fold classification of noble disciples.

8. Paribbājaka Vagga (The Division on Wanderers)

71. Tevijjavacchagotta Sutta (To Vacchagotta on the Threefold True Knowledge): Here, the *Buddha* visits the ascetic Vacchagotta and claims that He is called "*tevijja*" ("possessing the threefold knowledge"), because He has recollection of His previous lives, supernormal vision, and knowledge of the way leading to the elimination of the taints (*āsava*).
72. Aggivacchagotta Sutta (To Vacchagotta on Fire): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains to the ascetic Vacchagotta why He does not hold any speculative views. Using the simile of the extinguished fire, He tries to indicate the destiny of the liberated being.
73. Mahāvacchagotta Sutta (The Greater Discourse to Vacchagotta): This *sutta* relates the full conversion of the ascetic Vacchagotta to the *Dhamma*, his going forth, and his attainment of Arahantship.
74. Dīghanakha Sutta (To Dīghanakha): Here, the *Buddha* refutes the skeptical views of the ascetic Dīghanakha (also known as Aggivessana) and teaches him the way to liberation through the contemplation of feelings. This *sutta* also contains a brief account of Venerable Sāriputta's attainment of Arahantship.
75. Māgandiya Sutta (To Māgandiya): Here, the *Buddha* meets the hedonist philosopher Māgandiya and points out to him the dangers in pursuing sensual pleasures, the benefits of renunciation, and the meaning of *nibbāna*.
76. Sandaka Sutta (To Sandaka): In this *sutta*, Venerable Ānanda teaches a group of wandering ascetics four ways to negate the living of the Holy Life and four kinds of

Holy Life without consolation. He then goes on to explain the Holy Life that is truly fruitful.

77. Mahāsakuludāyi Sutta (The Greater Discourse to Sakuludāyin): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains to a group of wandering ascetics the reasons why His disciples venerate Him and look to Him for guidance.
78. Samaṇamaṇḍikā Sutta (Samaṇamaṇḍikāputta): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains the qualities of perfect virtue.
79. Cūḷasakuludāyi Sutta (The Shorter Discourse to Sakuludāyin): Here, the *Buddha* examines the doctrine of the Jain leader Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta, using the simile of "the most beautiful girl in the country," to expose the folly of his claims. At the end of the discourse, the Ascetic Sakuludāyin (also called "Udāyin"), though convinced of the superiority of the *Buddha's* doctrine, is obstructed by his companions from living the Holy Life under the dispensation of the *Buddha*.
80. Vekhanassa Sutta (To Vekhanassa): This is partially similar to the preceding *sutta*, with an additional section on sensual pleasure.

9. Rāja Vagga (The Division on Kings)

81. Ghaṭīkāra Sutta (Ghaṭīkāra the Potter): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* tells Venerable Ānanda of His previous existence in Jotipāla at the time of the Buddha Kassapa.
82. Raṭṭhapāla Sutta (On Raṭṭhapāla): This *sutta* tells the story of a young man named Raṭṭhapāla, whose parents tried in vain to dissuade him from entering the *Sangha*. At a later date, Raṭṭhapāla returns home to visit his parents.
83. Makhādeva Sutta (King Makhādeva): Here, the *Buddha* recounts His previous life as King Makhādeva. The story is that of an ancient lineage of kings and how their virtuous tradition was broken due to negligence.
84. Madhurā Sutta (At Madhurā): This *sutta* contains a discourse given after the death of the *Buddha* by Venerable Kaccāna to King Avantiputta on the real meaning of caste.
85. Bodhirājakumāra Sutta (To Prince Bodhi): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* counters the claim that pleasure is to be gained through pain with an account of His own quest for Enlightenment.
86. Angulimāla Sutta (On Angulimāla): This *sutta* contains the famous story of how the *Buddha* subdued the notorious criminal Angulimāla and led him to the attainment of Arahantship.
87. Piyajātaka Sutta (Born from Those Who Are Dear): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* gives consolation and advice to a household who has just lost a son, showing how sorrow and grief arise from those whom we hold dear. Eventually, news of this event reached the ears of King Pasenadi and Queen Mallikā, which resulted in a dispute between them. Thereupon, they sent the Brahmin Nāḷijangha to ask the *Buddha* about what he had said to the householder. After the *Buddha* explained the meaning, Nāḷijangha returned to the palace and settled the dispute.

88. Bāhitikā Sutta (The Cloak): In this *sutta*, Venerable Ānanda answers a question posed by King Pasenadi about the *Buddha's* behavior. Thereafter, the King presents Venerable Ānanda with a piece of foreign cloth.
89. Dhammacetiya Sutta (Monuments to the *Dhamma*): Here, King Pasenadi visits the *Buddha* and extols the virtues of the Holy Life, presenting ten reasons why he shows such deep veneration to the *Buddha*.
90. Kaṇṇakatthala Sutta (At Kaṇṇakatthala): This *sutta* contains a conversation between the *Buddha* and King Pasenadi on caste, the *devas*, and Brahmā.

10. Brāhmaṇa Vagga (The Division on Brahmins)

91. Brahmāyu Sutta (Brahmāyu): In this *sutta*, an old and erudite Brahmin named Brahmāyu learns about the *Buddha*, goes to meet Him, and becomes a disciple. This *sutta* discusses the thirty-two marks of a Great Man and the *Buddha's* daily routine.
92. Sela Sutta (To Sela): This *sutta* contains the story of the Brahmin Sela, who sees the thirty-two marks of the *Buddha*, gains faith in Him, and becomes a *Bhikkhu*, along with his company of pupils. (The same story is related in the *Sutta Nipāta* 3:7.)
93. Assalāyana Sutta (To Assalāyana): In this *sutta*, the young Brahmin Assalāyana approaches the *Buddha* and discusses the question of caste with Him. Assalāyana argues that Brahmins are the highest caste. This *sutta* contains an important presentation of the *Buddha's* views on the subject.
94. Ghoṭamukha Sutta (To Ghoṭamukha): Here, the Brahmin Ghoṭamukha questions Venerable Udena on the value of the renunciate life. Thereafter, Ghoṭamukha builds an assembly hall for the *Sangha*.
95. Cankī Sutta (With Cankī): This *sutta* contains a discussion of brahmanic doctrines. The young Brahmin Cankī visits the *Buddha* and questions Him about these doctrines. The *Buddha* refutes these doctrines and instructs Cankī about the proper way to the realization of ultimate truth.
96. Esukārī Sutta (To Esukārī): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* and a Brahmin discuss the claim that the Brahmins are superior to the other castes.
97. Dhānañjāni Sutta (To Dhānañjāni): In this *sutta*, Sāriputta explains to the Brahmin Dhānañjāni that family duties are no excuse for wrong-doing.
98. Vāseṭṭha Sutta (To Vāseṭṭha): In this *sutta*, mainly in verse, the *Buddha* resolves a dispute between two young Brahmins on the nature of a true Brahmin. (The same discourse recurs in the *Sutta Nipāta* 3:9.)
99. Subha Sutta (To Subha): Here, the *Buddha* answers the young Brahmin Subha's questions about whether a person should remain a householder or leave the world, and then teaches him the way to rebirth in the Brahma-realm.
100. Sangārava Sutta (To Sangārava): In this *sutta*, a Brahmin student named Sangārava questions the *Buddha* about the basis on which He teaches the fundamentals of the Holy Life.

Uparipaṇṇāsa

11. Devadaha Vagga (The Division at Devadaha)

101. Devadaha Sutta (At Devadaha): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* examines the Jain thesis that liberation is to be attained by self-mortification, proposing a different account of how striving becomes fruitful.
102. Pañcattaya Sutta (The Five and Three): Here, the *Buddha* reviews five theories of the soul and shows that the way of release (*nibbāna*) does not depend upon any of them.
103. Kinti Sutta (What Do You Think about Me?): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains how *Bhikkhus* can resolve disagreements about the *Dhamma*.
104. Sāmagāma Sutta (At Sāmagāma): After the death of the Jain leader Niganṭha Nātaputta, the *Buddha* lays down disciplinary rules for the guidance of the *Sangha* to ensure harmonious functioning after His demise.
105. Sunakkhatta Sutta (To Sunakkhatta): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* discusses the problem of an individual's overestimation of his progress in meditation.
106. Ānañjasappāya Sutta (The Way to the Imperturbable): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains the approaches to various levels of higher meditative states culminating in *nibbāna*.
107. Gaṇakamoggallāna Sutta (To Gaṇaka Moggallāna): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* sets forth the gradual training of a Buddhist monk and describes Himself as "the one who shows the way."
108. Gopakamoggallāna Sutta (With Gopaka Moggallāna): In this *sutta*, after the death of the *Buddha*, Venerable Ānanda explains to Vassakāra that the *Dhamma* is now the only guide.
109. Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Full-moon Night): Here, the *Buddha* answers questions posed by a *Bhikkhu* on the five aggregates, clinging, personality view, and the realization of non-self.
110. Cūḷapuṇṇama Sutta (The Shorter Discourse on the Full-moon Night): This *sutta* contains a discourse on the differences between an "untrue man" and a "true man."

12. Anupada Vagga (The Division of One by One)

111. Anupada Sutta (One by One as They Occurred): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* describes Sāriputta's development of insight when he was training for Arahantship.
112. Chabbisodhana Sutta (The Sixfold Purity): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* discusses the questions to ask a *Bhikkhu* who claims he has attained Arahantship and how he would answer if his claim were genuine.
113. Sappurisa Sutta (The True Man): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* discusses the good and bad qualities of a *Bhikkhu*.
114. Sevitabbāsevitabba Sutta (To Be Cultivated and Not to Be Cultivated): Here, Venerable Sāriputta expounds the right way to live the Holy Life.

115. Bahudhātuka Sutta (The Many Kinds of Elements): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* expounds in detail the elements, the sense bases, Dependent Origination, and the kinds of situations that are possible and impossible in the world.
116. Isigili Sutta (The Gullet of the Seers): Here, the *Buddha* lists the names and epithets of *Pacceka Buddhas* who formerly dwelt on the mountain Isigili.
117. Mahācattārīsaka Sutta (The Great Forty): This *sutta* contains an exposition of the Noble Eightfold Path and of the interrelationships among the factors that constitute that Path.
118. Ānāpānasati Sutta (Mindfulness of Breathing): This important *sutta* contains an exposition of the sixteen steps in mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) and of the relationship of this meditation practice to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.
119. Kāyagatāsati Sutta (Mindfulness of the Body): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains how mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*) should be developed and cultivated and the benefits to which it leads.
120. Sankhāruppatti Sutta (Reappearance by Aspiration): This *sutta* contains a discourse on the development of the five qualities enabling a *Bhikkhu* to determine the conditions of his rebirth.

13. Suññata Vagga (The Division on Voidness)

121. Cūḷasuññata Sutta (The Shorter Discourse on Voidness): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* instructs Venerable Ānanda on the "genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness (*suññatā*)."
122. Mahāsuññata Sutta (The Greater Discourse on Voidness): Upon finding that the *Bhikkhus* have grown fond of socializing, the *Buddha* stresses the need for seclusion in order to abide in voidness.
123. Acchariya-abbhutadhamma Sutta (Wonderful and Marvelous): Here, Venerable Ānanda recounts to a group of *Bhikkhus* the wonderful and marvelous events that preceded and attended the birth of the *Buddha*.
124. Bakkula Sutta (Bakkula): In this *sutta*, the elder disciple Bakkula enumerates the austere practices he has followed during his eighty years in the *Sangha* and exhibits a remarkable death.
125. Dantabhūmi Sutta (The Grade of the Tamed): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* uses the simile of elephant training to show how one should instruct another in the *Dhamma*.
126. Bhūmija Sutta (Bhūmija): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* employs a number of similes to illustrate the natural fruitfulness of the Noble Eightfold Path.
127. Anuruddha Sutta (Anuruddha): In this *sutta*, Venerable Anuruddha explains the difference between the immeasurable deliverance of the mind and the exalted deliverance of the mind to the householder Pañcakanga.
128. Upakkilesa Sutta (Imperfections): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* calms the quarrels and wrangling that have broken out among the *Bhikkhus* of Kosambī and discusses the

various impediments to meditative progress He encountered during His quest for Enlightenment, with particular reference to the divine-eye (*dibba-cakkhu*).

129. Bālapaṇḍita Sutta (Fools and Wise Men): This *sutta* discusses the sufferings of woeful states or life as an animal that a fool reaps through his evil deeds after death, and the pleasures of the celestial realms that a wise man reaps through his good deeds after death.
130. Devadūta Sutta (The Divine Messengers): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* describes the sufferings of woeful states that await the evil-doer after death.

14. Vibhanga Vagga (The Division of Expositions)

131. Bhaddekaratta Sutta (A Single Excellent Night): This *sutta* contains a poem of four verses, with a commentary on striving.
132. Ānandabhaddekaratta Sutta (Ānanda and a Single Excellent Night): This *sutta* is Venerable Ānanda's exposition of the same poem.
133. Mahākaccānabhaddekaratta Sutta (Mahākaccāna and a Single Excellent Night): This *sutta* is Venerable Mahākaccāna's exposition of the same poem.
134. Lomasakangiyabhaddekaratta Sutta (Lomasakangiya and a Single Excellent Night): This *sutta* is the *Buddha's* exposition of the same poem to Venerable Lomasa-kangiya.
135. Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta (The Shorter Exposition of Action): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains the various results of different kinds of *kamma*.
136. Mahākammavibhanga Sutta (The Greater Exposition of Action): Here, the *Buddha* refutes those who deny the operation of *kamma*.
137. Saḷāyatanavibhanga Sutta (The Exposition of the Sixfold Base): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* expounds the six internal and external sense bases and other related topics.
138. Uddesavibhanga Sutta (The Exposition of a Summary): In this *sutta*, Venerable Mahākaccāna elaborates on a brief saying of the *Buddha* on the training on consciousness and the overcoming of agitation.
139. Araṇavibhanga Sutta (The Exposition of Non-Conflict): This *sutta* contains a detailed discourse by the *Buddha* on things that lead to conflict and things that lead away from conflict.
140. Dhātuvibhanga Sutta (The Exposition of Elements): Stopping at a potter's workshop for the night, the *Buddha* meets a monk named Pukkusāti and gives him a profound discourse on elements culminating in the four foundations of Arahantship.
141. Saccavibhanga Sutta (The Exposition of the Truths): Here, Venerable Sāriputta gives a detailed analysis of the Four Noble Truths.
142. Dakkhiṇavibhanga Sutta (The Exposition of Offerings): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* enumerates fourteen kinds of personal offerings and seven kinds made to the *Sangha*.

15. Sāḷayatana Vagga (The Division of the Sixfold Base)

143. Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta (Advice to Anāthapiṇḍika): This *sutta* deals with the death of Anāthapiṇḍika, his rebirth in Tusita heaven, and his appearance before the *Buddha*.
144. Channovāda Sutta (Advice to Channa): In his *sutta*, Venerable Channa, gravely ill, takes his own life despite the attempts of two brother-monks to dissuade him.
145. Puṇṇovāda Sutta (Advice to Puṇṇa): In this *sutta*, Venerable Puṇṇa receives a short exhortation from the *Buddha* on bearing pleasure and pain and decides to go live among the fierce people of a remote territory.
146. Nandakovāda Sutta (Advice from Nandaka): Here, Venerable Nandaka gives a discourse on impermanence to Mahā Pajāpatī Gotamī and five hundred *Bhikkhunīs*.
147. Cūḷarāhulovāda Sutta (The Shorter Discourse of Advice to Rāhula): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* takes His son, Venerable Rāhula, to the forest and questions him on impermanence. Thereupon, Venerable Rāhula attains Arahantship. Thinking that the *Buddha* would be further instructing Venerable Rāhula on the destruction of the taints, many thousands of deities come to listen to the discourse.
148. Chachakka Sutta (The Six Sets of Six): This is an especially profound and penetrating discourse on the contemplation of all the factors of sense experience as not-self.
149. Mahāsaḷāyatanika Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Sixfold Base): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* discusses how wrong view about the six kinds of sense experience leads to future bondage, while right view about them leads to liberation.
150. Nagaravindeyya Sutta (To the Nagaravindans): In this *sutta*, the *Buddha* explains to a group of Brahmin householders what kinds of ascetics and Brahmins should be venerated.
151. Piṇḍapātapārisuddhi Sutta (The Purification of Almsfood): This *sutta* contains a discourse by the *Buddha* to Venerable Sāriputta on how a *Bhikkhu* should review himself to make himself worthy of almsfood.
152. Indriyabhāvanā Sutta (The Development of the Faculties): Here, the *Buddha* rejects the methods of the Brahmin Pārāsariya for subduing the senses and expounds His own methods.

Saṁyutta Nikāya

Overview

The *Saṁyutta Nikāya* (Kindred Sayings) contains 2,889 dialogues, discourses, and sayings, in prose and verse, which deal with either a particular doctrine or a specific person. The *Saṁyutta Nikāya* ranks as one of the most inspiring compilations in the Pāḷi Canon, showing the *Buddha* in His full magnificence as the peerless "teacher of gods and men."

Textual Analysis[373]

The *Saṁyutta Nikāya* is divided into five sections, or divisions (*vagga*), which, again, are subdivided into fifty-six groups (*saṁyutta*). The first *vagga* is named after its literary form, the rest according to the contents of the respective first *saṁyutta*:

1. Sagāthavagga "division containing verses";
2. Nidānavagga "division (explaining) the *nidāna*[374] (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)";
3. Khandhavagga "division (explaining) the five aggregates (*khandha*)";
4. Saḷāyatanavagga "division (explaining) the six sense organs with their objects";
5. Mahāvagga "great division."

The number of *saṁyuttas* found in a *vagga* is about ten. The *saṁyuttas* are, again, subdivided as, for example, the Khandhasaṁyutta of the *Khandhavagga*, into a Mūla-paṇṇāsa, Majjhima-paṇṇāsa, and Upari-paṇṇāsa, "basic," "middle," and "further" (division) of fifty, respectively, each containing fifty *suttas* grouped together in five *vaggas* with ten *suttas*.

It is not easy to get a clear picture of the full text of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, which is almost twice as long as that of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, with one hundred against sixty-four *bhaṇavāras*. As a result, the manuscripts tend to abbreviate *vaggas* 2—5 considerably, though not in a uniform way. Due to this lack of uniformity, the Sinhalese and Burmese manuscripts of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* almost look like copies of two different texts.

Equally obscure is the actual number of dialogues, discourses, and sayings in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. According to tradition, there should be 7,762, but only 2,889 have been counted in the European edition. The reason for this uncertainty is that the manuscripts often simply have key words, which are to be expanded into complete *suttas*, but without clear instructions on how to do this.

Consequently, this type of manuscript tradition is completely different from the one found in the first two *Nikāyas*, where the text is given in full, and only passages repeated verbally have been omitted at times. The *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, on the other hand, can be shrunk into a skeleton to be expanded again starting from the key words.[375]

The greater *vaggas* are arranged in a systematic way. The *Nidānavagga* contains the *paṭiccasamuppāda*, "(discourse on) Dependent Origination." This is followed by the *Khandhavagga*, which discusses the *khandhas* "aggregates." This is the first attempt in the *Tipiṭaka* that tries to give a systematization of the Teaching. Perhaps this is the reason behind the name of the *Nikāya*, "connected discourses," or "discourses grouped together," because texts of similar content were assembled and arranged side by side.

This, then, is as different from the *Dīgha Nikāya* and *Majjhima Nikāya* as is the form of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* texts. For, in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, the Teaching of the

[373] This section is adapted from Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 35—38.
[374] *Nidāna* "foundation, occasion; source, origin, cause; reason, reference, subject."
[375] Similarly, the *mātikā*, "matrices," of the *Kathāvatthu* is expanded by Moggallitissaputta.

Buddha is no longer necessarily embedded in a story. The intention to present the preaching of every text as a unique event is completely missing in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. Although the formula for the beginning is also used in the mostly very short *suttas* in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, though rarely also the one for the end, in between, there are often only enumerations of dogmatic concepts.

Nevertheless, occasionally the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* has text that might fit well into the *Majjhima Nikāya*, as does the Cittasaṁyutta, *Saṁyutta Nikāya* IV 281, 11—304, 26, which relates different events in the life of the householder Citta, who was a lay follower of the *Buddha* for thirty years. It is noteworthy that Venerable Isidatta, while instructing Citta, refers to and actually quotes from the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Quotations of this kind seem to occur only in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* and the *Anguttara Nikāya*.

More complicated is the relation of the Satipaṭṭhānasaṁyutta, *Saṁyutta Nikāya* V 141—192, to the *satipaṭṭhāna suttas* found in *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 22, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, and *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 10, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which deserve a detailed study, because it seems that, sometimes, the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* has preserved smaller parts from which larger units were built, or pieces of texts, which, for some reason, were not incorporated into the larger *suttas*.

Some parts of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* contain passages hardly related to Buddhism, such as *Mātugāmasaṁyutta*, *Saṁyutta Nikāya* IV 246, 2—250, 28, "(texts) on women grouped together" in the *Saḷāyatanavagga*, for this is, rather, some kind of *strīdharma* "behavior for women." The *Nāgasaṁyutta*, *Saṁyutta Nikāya* III 240, 16—246, 6 "(texts) on *nāgas*[376] grouped together" in the *Khandhavagga* is important for an aspect of ancient Indian religion about which not much is known.

The first part of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, the *Sagāthavagga*, is completely different from the *vaggas* described so far, but rather similar, in some respects, to the *Sutta Nipāta*. The most important part of the text are the verses. These sometimes also occur in other parts of the *Tipiṭaka*. The verses of the *Vangīsasaṁyutta*, *Saṁyutta Nikāya* I 185, 3—196, 27, are attributed to this very monk in *Theragāthā* 1209—1262, etc.

Parts of the *Sagāthavagga* seem to be very old, actually very near the Vedic texts, as in the section where Sakka fights the Asuras in the Sakkasaṁyutta, *Saṁyutta Nikāya* I 216, 4—240, 4. One contest is of particular interest, when Sakka and the king of the Asuras, Vepacitti, fight each other with well formulated verses (*subhāsita*), *Saṁyutta Nikāya* I 222, 21—224, 14, in the presence of referees (*pārisajja*).

The most prominent part of the *Sagāthavagga* is the Dhajagga Sutta, which contains the *iti'pi so*-formula.[377] This text, which lay practitioners know by heart even in the present day, contains an archaic text on the *pavāraṇā*,[378] explained in *Mahāvagga* IV *Pavāraṇakkhandhaka*, *Vinaya* I 159, 22—160, 2.

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[376] *Nāga* "snake, serpent; dragon." In Hindu and Buddhist mythology, *nāgas* are members of a class of semidivine beings, half human and half serpentine. They are considered to be a strong, handsome race who can assume either human or wholly serpentine form. They are regarded as being potentially dangerous but, in some ways, are superior to humans. (This footnote is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

[377] "Such, indeed, …", as in *Iti'pi so bhagavā arahaṁ:* … "Such, indeed, is the Exalted One: …"

[378] *Pavāraṇā*, a ceremony at the termination of the rainy season (*vassa*).

The form of texts developed in the *Sagāthavagga* has also been developed in the *Jātakas*.

It is impossible to determine why a collection of texts so different as the *Sagāthavagga*, on the one hand, and the remaining parts of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, on the other hand, have been combined.

It has been observed that many of the *suttas* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* were delivered at Sāvatthī. Therefore, it has been suggested that this collection may have been brought together at this place.

Synopsis[379]

1. Sagātha Vagga (Division Containing Verses)

1. Devata Saṁyutta: Questions of *devas*.
2. Devaputta: Questions of the sons of *devas*.
3. Kosala: Anecdotes of King Pasenadi of Kosala.
4. Māra: Māra's hostile acts against the *Buddha* and His disciples.
5. Bhikkhunī: Māra's unsuccessful seduction of *Bhikkhunīs* and his arguments with them.
6. Brahmā: Brahmā Sahampati requests the *Buddha* to preach the *Dhamma* to the world.
7. Brāhmaṇa: The Brahmin Bhāradvāja's encounter with the *Buddha* and his conversion.
8. Vangīsa: Venerable Vangīsa, the foremost poet among the *Bhikkhus*, tells of his eradication of lust.
9. Vana: Forest deities direct undeveloped *Bhikkhus* on the right path.
10. Yakkha: Encounters of the *Buddha* and *Bhikkhunīs* with demons.
11. Sakka: The *Buddha* enumerates the qualities of Sakka (= Indra), King of the Gods.

2. Nidāna Vagga (Division [Explaining] the *Nidāna*)

12. Nidāna Saṁyutta: Explanation of the doctrine of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).
13. Abhisamaya: The encouragement to attain penetration of the *Dhamma*.
14. Dhātu: Description of physical, mental, and abstract elements (*dhātu*).
15. Anamatagga: On the "incalculable beginning" (of *saṁsāra*).
16. Kassapa: Exhortation of Venerable Kassapa.
17. Lābhasakkāra: "Gains, favors, and flattery."
18. Rāhula: The instructing of Venerable Rāhula.
19. Lakkhaṇa: Questions of Venerable Lakkhaṇa on hungry ghosts (*petas*).
20. Opamma: Various points of *Dhamma* illustrated by similes.

[379] The descriptions in this synopsis are adapted from Russell Webb (editor), *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon* (Wheel publication no. 217/220) (second edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1991]), pp. 20—24.

21. Bhikkhu: Admonitions of the *Buddha* and Venerable Moggallāna to the *Bhikkhus*.

3. Khandha Vagga (Division [Explaining] the Five Aggregates)

22. Khandha Saṁyutta: The aggregates (*khandha*), physical and mental, that constitute the "individual."
23. Rādha: Questions of Venerable Rādha.
24. Diṭṭhi: Wrong views (*diṭṭhi*) arise from clinging to the aggregates.
25. Okkantika: Entering the Path through confidence (*saddhā*) and through wisdom (*paññā*).
26. Uppāda: Arising of the aggregates leads to suffering (*dukkha*).
27. Kilesa: Defilements arise from the sixfold sense base and sense-consciousness.
28. Sāriputta: Venerable Sāriputta answers Venerable Ānanda's questions concerning the calming of the senses.
29. Nāga: Enumeration of four kinds of *nāgas* (serpents).
30. Supaṇṇa: Enumeration of four kinds of *garudas* (magical birds).
31. Gandhabbakāya: Description of the *gandhabbas* (celestial musicians).
32. Valāhaka: Description of the *valāhakas* (cloud spirits).
33. Vacchagotta: The wandering ascetic Vacchagotta's metaphysical questions.
34. Samādhi: Enumeration of the four types of practitioners of the *jhānas* (meditative absorptions).

4. Saḷāyatana Vagga
(Division [Explaining] the Six Sense Organs with Their Objects)

35. Saḷāyatana Saṁyutta: The sixfold sense base (*saḷāyatana*) and the correct attitude towards it.
36. Vedanā: The three kinds of feeling (*vedanā*) and the correct attitude towards them.
37. Mātugāma: The destinies of women according to their qualities.
38. Jambukhādaka: Questions of the wandering ascetic Jambukhādaka to Venerable Sāriputta.
39. Sāmandaka: Questions of the wandering ascetic Sāmandaka to Venerable Sāriputta.
40. Moggallāna: Venerable Moggallāna explains the meditative absorptions (*jhāna*) to the *Bhikkhus*.
41. Citta: Senses and sense-objects are not intrinsically evil, only the unwholesome desires that arise through their contact.
42. Gāmani: Definitions of "wrathful" and "kindly."
43. Asankhata: The unconditioned (*nibbāna*).
44. Avyākata: Speculative questions posed by King Pasenadi to Venerables Khemā, Anuruddha, Sāriputta, and Moggallāna.

5. Mahā Vagga (Great Division)

45. Magga Saṁyutta: The Noble Eightfold Path: (1) right understanding; (2) right thought; (3) right speech; (4) right action; (5) right livelihood; (6) right effort; (7) right mindfulness; and (8) right concentration.
46. Bojjhanga: The Seven Factors of Enlightenment: (1) mindfulness; (2) investigation (of truth); (3) energy; (4) joy; (5) tranquility; (6) concentration; and (7) equanimity.
47. Satipaṭṭhāna: The Four Foundations of Mindfulness: mindful contemplation of: (1) of the body; (2) of feelings; (3) of the state of the mind; and (4) of the contents of the mind.
48. Indriya: The Five Faculties: (1) confidence (*saddhā*); (2) energy (*viriya*); (3) mindfulness (*sati*); (4) concentration (*samādhi*); and (5) wisdom (*paññā*).
49. Sammappadhāna: The Four Right Efforts: the fourfold effort to put forth the energy, to prod the mind, and to struggle: (1) to prevent unarisen unwholesome mental states from arising; (2) abandon unwholesome mental states that have already arisen; (3) to develop wholesome mental states that have not yet arisen; and (4) to maintain and perfect wholesome mental states that have already arisen.
50. Bala: The Five Powers (the same as the Five Faculties above): (1) confidence; (2) energy; (3) mindfulness; (4) concentration; and (5) wisdom.
51. Iddhipāda: The Four Psychic Powers: (1) will (*chanda*); (2) energy (*viriya*); (3) thought (*citta*); and (4) investigation (*vimaṁsā*).
52. Anuruddha: Supernormal powers attained by Venerable Anuruddha through mindfulness.
53. Jhāna: The four meditative absorptions (of the fine-material sphere [*rūpajjhāna*]).
54. Ānāpāna: Mindfulness of breathing.
55. Sotāpatti: Description of a Stream-Winner (*Sotāpanna*).
56. Sacca: The Four Noble Truths: (1) the truth of suffering (*dukkha*); (2) of its origin (*samudaya*); (3) of its cessation (*nirodha*); and (4) of the path (*magga*) leading to its cessation.

Anguttara Nikāya

Overview

The *Anguttara Nikāya* (Numerical Sayings[380]) contains 2,344 *suttas* arranged numerically. There are eleven classified sections (*nipāta*) or groups, the subject of the first being single items, followed by groups of two items, and so on to the final group of eleven items.

[380] Also translated as "Gradual Sayings." In the Commentaries, the *Anguttara Nikāya* is occasionally referred to as *Ekuttara Nikāya*, "the collection [of sayings] increasing by one." This agrees with the Northern Buddhist tradition, where the name of this collection is *Ekottarāgama* (or *Ekottarikāgama*).

Textual Analysis[381]

The name The *Anguttara* is difficult to explain grammatically, though generally understood as "one item more, in addition," which is a translation justified by the tradition: *eka-eka-angātirekavasena* "always one item more." It is used side by side with *Ekuttara*, which means "one more." The corresponding translation, however, does not apply for *Dīgha Nikāya*, no. 34, Dasuttara Sutta (Expanding Decades) "the highest number of which is ten," although this word may have been the model for the formation of the word *Anguttara*.

The subdivisions are designated by the term *nipāta*, which is used this way only in Buddhist texts,[382] thus: *Ekakanipāta*, etc., "chapter containing the ones."

Strictly speaking, the numerical arrangement works only from *Ekaka-* to *Pañcaka-nipāta*, because the number necessary for the chapters on six and higher is sometimes reached only by adding up groups of 3+3 or 5+4, or even 3+3+3+2 items in the case of the *Ekādasakanipāta*.

The exact structure of the *Anguttara Nikāya* is difficult to determine. Again, the original number of *suttas* is 9,557 against the 2,344 actually counted. Inasmuch as there are some old manuscripts from the 16th century, which sometimes have a text worded slightly differently from the printed editions, for example, in the introductory formulas, it would be useful to check the structure of the *Anguttara Nikāya* against this evidence.

Originally, it seems, the *Anguttara Nikāya* had only ten *nipātas*. This can be deduced from the fact that, at the end of the *Dasakanipāta*, not only groups of ten items occur, as the title implies, but also groups of twenty, thirty, and forty items, which is typical for the last chapter of a text. Thus, the structure of the *Anguttara Nikāya* would repeat the one of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, no. 34, Dasuttara Sutta, on a large scale.

Structuring texts on numerical principles was a widespread practice in ancient India. The third *Aṅga* of the Jain canon, *Ṭhāṇaṁga*/*Stānaṅga*, is arranged, like the *Anguttara Nikāya*, from one to ten, and the fourth *Aṅga*, *Samavāyaṅga*, from one to one million. Similar structures are found in the *Mahābhārata*, such as the *Viduranītivākya* in the *Udyogaparvan*.

Among the items treated in the *Ekakanipāta*, there are prominent persons, 42 monks (*Anguttara Nikāya* I 23, 16—25, 16), and 13 nuns (*Anguttara Nikāya* I 25, 17—31), among them no. 5, Dhammadinnā (*Anguttara Nikāya* I 25, 22), as the foremost among the *dhammakathikās* "preachers," who has spoken *Majjhima Nikāya* no. 44, Cūḷavedalla Sutta (The Shorter Series of Questions and Answers), a rare instance of a discourse given by a woman. At the end, ten men and ten women are enumerated, who are prominent among the lay followers (*Anguttara Nikāya* I 25, 32—36, 27), among them Khujjuttarā, who had heard the *Itivuttaka* from the *Buddha*. The Commentary gives long stories on all these persons.

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[381] This section is adapted from Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 38—41.

[382] Buddhist Sanskrit texts show that *nipāta* "section, chapter (of a book)" is interchangeable with *vagga* (Sanskrit *varga*) "a section or chapter of a canonical book."

Some passages from the *Anguttara Nikāya* have found their way into other parts of the *Tipiṭaka*, such as the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta. Like both the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* and the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the *Anguttara Nikāya*, too, sometimes contains rather old *Vinaya* passages in, for example, the classification of *āpatti* "offense" (*Anguttara Nikāya* I 88, 1—10). Here, and in similar paragraphs, old material may sometimes be preserved from which the *Vinaya Piṭaka* has been built. In other cases, the source of an *Anguttara Nikāya* paragraph may have been the *Vinaya*, such as the account of the establishment of the Order of Nuns found in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* (*Anguttara Nikāya* IV 274—279), which is the same as what is found in the *Vinaya* (II 253—256), because of the eight *garudhamma* "strict rules" for the nuns.

Interesting is the lament of Pasenadi, the king of Kosala, about the death of his wife, Queen Mallikā, and his consolation by the *Buddha* (*Anguttara Nikāya* III, 57, 1—19), for this reads as if preserved only to commemorate that queen. It is followed by a story of considerable interest for cultural history. After the death of his wife, Queen Bhaddā, King Muṇḍa refuses to eat or take a bath, and tries to preserve the corpse of his wife in oil (*Anguttara Nikāya* III 57—62). Only after being instructed by the *Buddha* about the vanity of his plan does he have her cremated and even builds a *stūpa* for her (*Anguttara Nikāya* III 62, 27).

Further, the four kinds of poets enumerated at *Anguttara Nikāya* II 320, 11—13, may be mentioned here.

On the other hand, it is worthwhile to point out important items of the *Dhamma* not mentioned in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, such as the four *pubbanimittāni*,[383] the Four Noble Truths, etc. The *paṭiccasamuppāda* "(teaching on) Dependent Origination," with its twelve links, is missing, since it would not fit into a numerical structure ending with eleven.

Structurally, the four *Nikāyas* can be divided into two groups. The collections of longer texts in the *Dīgha Nikāya* and *Majjhima Nikāya*, without any recognizable order, are quite different from the collections of comparatively brief texts in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* and *Anguttara Nikāya*, where a more systematic approach in arranging the texts seems to have been envisaged. Further, the last two *Nikāyas* seem to be much more open to enlargement, because it is rather easy to insert texts that fit, either, according to their content, into the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, or, according to the number of items, into the *Anguttara Nikāya*.

However, too many questions have to be investigated yet for conclusions about the structure of the four *Nikāyas* discussed so far, such as, for example, the direction of movement of texts perhaps starting from the short *suttas*, which could be absorbed into the long ones. Moreover, a comparison with the canon of the Jains might show that the longer *suttas* in the *Dīgha Nikāya* and *Majjhima Nikāya* are structurally much more typically Buddhist than the shorter texts in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* and *Anguttara Nikāya*.

[383] Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit *pūrva-nimitta* "advance sign," prognosticating something that is about to happen in the future. Used, for example, in reference to the thirty-two signs that preceded and forecast the birth of the *Buddha*; also used in reference to dreams that foretell future events, as in King Suddhodana's dream predicting his son's renunciation of the world, and in reference to a deity that is about to "fall."

And, lastly, it should be kept in mind that, originally, the texts may have been arranged quite differently, when the earlier division of the Buddhist texts into *angas* "limb, part" was still valid.

Synopsis[384]

1. Ekaka Nipāta: This section deals with: (1) the mind: concentrated/unconcentrated, trained/untrained, and cultivated/uncultivated; (2) exertion; (3) diligence; (4) the *Buddha*; (5) Venerable Sāriputta; (6) Venerable Moggallāna; (7) Venerable Mahā-kassapa; (8) views: right/wrong; (9) concentration: right/wrong.
2. Duka Nipāta: This section deals with: (1) two kinds of *kamma*, either producing results in this life or leading to rebirth; (2) cause of origin of good and evil; (3) hopes and desires; (4) gain and longevity; (5) two kinds of gifts (that of material things and that of *Dhamma*); (6) two assemblies of *Bhikkhus*; (7) those who have realized/not realized the Four Noble Truths; (8) those who live/do not live in harmony.
3. Tika Nipāta: This section deals with: (1) three offenses: of body, of speech, and of mind; (2) three praiseworthy acts: generosity, renunciation, and maintenance of parents; (3) exertion to: checking the growth of unarisen unwholesome (evil) mental states, developing unarisen wholesome (good) mental states, and removing arisen unwholesome (evil) mental states; (4) heretical views: that pleasant and painful and neither pleasant nor painful experiences are caused by previous actions, that these experiences are providential, and that these experiences are causeless.
4. Catukka Nipāta: This section deals with: (1) undisciplined persons lack conduct, concentration, insight, and emancipation; (2) the ignorant increase demerit by praising the unworthy, blaming the worthy, rejoicing when one should not rejoice, and not rejoicing when one should rejoice; (3) four kinds of persons: neither wise nor pious, not wise but pious, wise but not pious, and both wise and pious; (4) *Bhikkhus* should remain content with their robes, alms, dwelling-places, and medicines; (5) four kinds of happiness: living in a suitable environment, association with a well-developed person, self-realization, and accumulated merit in the past; (6) the four "divine abodes": loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity; (7) four qualities guarding a *Bhikkhu* against lapsing: observation of morality (*sīla*), control of the sense-doors, moderation in eating, and constant mindfulness; (8) four ways of self-concentration: for a happy condition in this life, for knowledge and insight, for mindfulness and self-possession, and for destruction of the defilements (*kilesa*); (9) four persons fostering hatred, hypocrisy, and gains and honors other than connected with the *Dhamma*; (10) four mistaken views: impermanence for permanence, pain for pleasure, non-self for self, and impurity for purity; (11) four faults of ascetics and Brahmins: drinking intoxicating drinks (liquor, alcohol), addiction to sense pleasures, accepting money, and earning one's

[384] The descriptions in this synopsis are adapted from Russell Webb (editor), *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon* (Wheel publication no. 217/220) (second edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1991]), pp. 24—27.

livelihood by unethical means; (12) four fields in merit-bringing happiness: rightly believing the *Buddha* to be enlightened, the *Dhamma* as well-expounded, the *Sangha* as well-established, and the disciples as being free from impurities; (13) four ways of living together: the vile with the vile, the vile with the good, the good with the vile, and the good with the good; (14) offering food gives the recipient: long life, beauty, happiness, and physical strength; (15) four conditions for worldly prosperity: persistent effort, protecting one's earnings, good friendship, and balanced livelihood; (16) four conditions for spiritual prosperity: confidence, morality, chastity, and wisdom; (17) four families of snakes to which one should extend loving-kindness; (18) four right efforts; (19) four unthinkables: the sphere of a *Buddha*, the *jhānas* (meditative absorptions), *kamma* and result (*vipāka*), and speculating about the origin of the world; (20) four places of pilgrimage: to the sites of: the *Buddha's* birth, Enlightenment, First Sermon, and passing away; (21) four kinds of beneficial/non-beneficial speech: truthfulness/lying, non-backbiting/backbiting, gentle/harsh, and thoughtful/frivolous; (22) four essential qualities: confidence (*saddhā*), energy (*viriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), and the four elements (*dhātu*); (23) four persons worthy of monuments: the *Buddha*, *Pacceka Buddhas*, *Arahants*, and "Wheel-turning" monarchs; and (24) *Bhikkhus* should not retire to the forest if given to: lust, malice, envy, or lacking common-sense.

5. Pañcaka Nipāta: This section deals with: (1) five good characteristics of a disciple: reverence, modesty, abstinence from unskillful acts, energy, and wisdom; (2) five mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*): desire for gratification of the senses, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and skeptical doubt; (3) five subjects of meditation: the impure, non-self, death, disagreeableness of food, and not finding delight in the world; (4) five evil qualities: not free from defilements (passions), hatred, delusion, hypocrisy, and malice; and (5) five good acts: loving actions of body, speech, and mind; observance of virtue; and holding right views.
6. Chakka Nipāta: This section deals with the sixfold duty of *Bhikkhus*: abstaining from distracting work, arguments, sleep, and company; humility; and association with the wise.
7. Sattaka Nipāta: This section deals with: (1) seven kinds of wealth: reverence, good conduct, modesty, abstinence from unskillful acts, learning, renunciation, and wisdom; and (2) seven kinds of attachment: requesting favors, hatred, mistaken confidence, doubt, pride, worldly experience, and ignorance.
8. Aṭṭhaka Nipāta: This section deals with eight causes of mindfulness/almsgiving/earthquakes.
9. Navaka Nipāta: This section deals with: (1) nine contemplations: impurity, death, disagreeableness of food, indifference to the world, impermanence, suffering resulting from impermanence, non-self, renunciation, and equanimity; and (2) nine kinds of persons: those who have trodden the four paths to *nibbāna* and who have experienced the fruits, together with the worldling.
10. Dasaka Nipāta: This section deals with ten contemplations: (1) impermanence; (2) non-self; (3) death; (4) disagreeableness of food; (5) indifference to the world; (6—

9) bone and four stages of a decomposing corpse: worm-infested, black with decay, fissured through decay, and bloated; and (10) ten kinds of purification: through right knowledge, right liberation, and the eight steps of the Noble Eightfold Path.

11. Ekadasaka Nipāta: This section deals with eleven kinds of happiness/ways to *nibbāna*/good and bad characteristics of a herdsman and a *Bhikkhu*.

Khuddaka Nikāya

Overview

The *Khuddaka Nikāya* (Smaller Collection) is subdivided into fifteen books. This *Nikāya* appears to have been put together gradually and contains a series of miscellaneous books, which were probably incorporated into the Canon after the other *Nikāyas* were closed.

1.	*Khuddaka Pāṭha*	(Shorter Texts)
2.	*Dhammapada*	(The Way of Truth)
3.	*Udāna*	(Paeans of Joy)
4.	*Itivuttaka*	("Thus Said" Discourses)
5.	*Sutta Nipāta*	(Collected Discourses)
6.	*Vimāna Vatthu*	(Stories of Celestial Mansions)
7.	*Peta Vatthu*	(Stories of *Peta*s)
8.	*Theragāthā*	(Psalms of the Brothers)
9.	*Therīgāthā*	(Psalms of the Sisters)
10.	*Jātaka*	(Birth Stories of the *Bodhisatta*)
11.	*Niddesa*	(Expositions)
12.	*Paṭisambhidāmagga*	(Book on Analytical Knowledge)
13.	*Apadāna*	(Lives of *Arahants*)
14.	*Buddhavaṁsa*	(History of the *Buddhas*)
15.	*Cariyā Piṭaka*	(Modes of Conduct)

Textual Analysis[385]

As noted above, the *Khuddaka Nikāya* consists of fifteen very heterogeneous works of widely varying length, the shortest being the *Khuddaka Pāṭha*, with less than 9 printed pages, in contrast to the *Niddesa*, with over 500 pages. Only three collections contain *suttas* similar to those of the first four *Nikāyas*, nine are collections of verses, one is a commentary, one a philosophical text, and the *Khuddaka Pāṭha* has been assembled from short pieces found elsewhere in the canon.

[385] This section is adapted from Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 41—43.

The actual number of texts found in this *Nikāya* is not uniform in the Theravādin countries, for, in Myanmar (Burma), *Nettippakaraṇa*, *Peṭakopadesa*, and *Milindapañha* have also been added to this *Nikāya*.

There is a long history about the uncertainty of the contents of this *Nikāya*. This uncertainty also prevails within the Theravādin School itself, the only school to possess a complete *Khuddaka Nikāya*. The earliest lists of texts contained in this *Nikāya* are found in the description of the canon at the beginning of the commentaries on the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Sutta Piṭaka*, and *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. While the *Vinaya* commentary lists fifteen texts, the *Abhidhamma* commentary only lists fourteen without elaborating on this — it is probably the *Khuddaka Pāṭha* that is missing.

The most important discussion of the contents of this *Nikāya*, however, is found in the *Sumangalavilāsinī*, the Commentary on the *Dīgha Nikāya*, because it is said here that the *Dīgha-* and *Majjhima-bhāṇakas* adhere to a tradition in which the texts have been recited in a sequence different from the one finally accepted by the Theravādin School. Consequently, there are two lists:

Standard sequence	Sequence in the *Dīgha-*/*Majjhima-bhāṇakas*
1. *Khuddaka Pāṭha*	1. *Jātaka*
2. *Dhammapada*	2. *Niddesa*
3. *Udāna*	3. *Paṭisambhidāmagga*
4. *Itivuttaka*	4. *Sutta Nipāta*
5. *Sutta Nipāta*	5. *Dhammapada*
6. *Vimāna Vatthu*	6. *Udāna*
7. *Peta Vatthu*	7. *Itivuttaka*
8. *Theragāthā*	8. *Vimāna Vatthu*
9. *Therīgāthā*	9. *Peta Vatthu*
10. *Jātaka*	10. *Theragāthā*
11. *Niddesa*	11. *Therīgāthā*
12. *Paṭisambhidāmagga*	12. *Cariyā Piṭaka*
13. *Apadāna*	13. *Apadāna*
14. *Buddhavaṁsa*	14. *Buddhavaṁsa*
15. *Cariyā Piṭaka*	

The *Khuddaka Pāṭha* is not accepted in either the *Dīgha-* or *Majjhima-bhāṇakas*. Both call the *Khuddaka Nikāya* the *Khuddakagantha* (*Sumangalavilāsinī* 15, 15.29), but, while the *Dīgha-bhāṇakas* include it in the *Abhidhamma*, the *Majjhima-bhāṇakas* place it in the *Sutta Piṭaka*.

Yet a different sequence seems to be found in the Commentary on the *Anguttara Nikāya*, when the disappearance of the *sāsana* is described. First, the end of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is lost, and then, the canon is described here as disappearing in the reverse order. There is no trace of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, because, after the *Anguttara Nikāya*, *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, *Majjhima Nikāya*, and *Dīgha Nikāya* disappear, then only the

Jātaka and *Vinaya* are available at a certain stage, which leaves the affiliation of the *Jātaka* open. Furthermore, there are still other relevant, partly difficult, passages in the Commentaries.

Synopsis[386]

1. *Khuddaka Pāṭha* (Shorter Texts): The *Khuddaka Pāṭha* contains the following texts:

   - Saraṇattaya: The thrice-repeated "Refuge Formula" of all Buddhists.[387]
   - Dasasikkhāpada: This is a list of the Ten Precepts (*dasa-sīla*, *dasa-sikkhāpada*[388]) binding on all novices (*sāmaṇera*).
   - Dvattiṁsākāra: A list of the thirty-two constituent body parts.
   - Kumārapañha: A sort of catechism of ten questions for novices.
   - Mangala Sutta: A poem on the "great blessings" (*mangala*).
   - Ratana Sutta: A poem on the "Three Jewels"[389] (*tiratana*) — the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*.
   - Tirokuḍḍa Sutta: A poem on the offerings to be made to the spirits of departed relatives.

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[386] The descriptions in this synopsis are adapted from Russell Webb (editor), *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon* (Wheel publication no. 217/220) (second edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1991]), pp. 28—39. Material has also been taken from Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 43—64.

[387] The formula runs as follows (each repeated three times, as indicated):

Namo tassa bhagavato *arahato sammā-sambuddhassa.*	Homage to the Worthy One, the Exalted One, the Fully Enlightened One.
Namo tassa bhagavato *arahato sammā-sambuddhassa.*	Homage to the Worthy One, the Exalted One, the Fully Enlightened One.
Namo tassa bhagavato *arahato sammā-sambuddhassa.*	Homage to the Worthy One, the Exalted One, the Fully Enlightened One.
Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi. *Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.* *Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.*	I go to the Buddha for Refuge. I go to the Dhamma for Refuge. I go to the Sangha for Refuge.
Dutiyampi, Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi. *Dutiyampi, Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.* *Dutiyampi, Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.*	A second time, I go to the Buddha for Refuge. A second time, I go to the Dhamma for Refuge. A second time, I go to the Sangha for Refuge.
Tatiyampi, Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi. *Tatiyampi, Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.* *Tatiyampi, Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.*	A third time, I go to the Buddha for Refuge. A third time, I go to the Dhamma for Refuge. A third time, I go to the Sangha for Refuge.

[388] *Sikkhāpada* means "steps in training, moral rules." It is synonymous here with *sīla*. *Dasa* means "ten."

[389] Also known as the "Triple Gem."

- Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta: A poem on the storing up of true treasure.
- Mettā Sutta: A poem on loving-kindness (*mettā*).

Only the Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta is without parallel elsewhere in the canon. This seems to indicate that it is an old independent text only contained in this collection in the *Piṭaka*. The remaining texts are found in the same sequence in the *Paritta*,[390] where there are two texts found between the Kumārapañha and the Mangala Sutta. In the *Khuddaka Pāṭha*, on the other hand, the Tirokuḍḍa Sutta and the Nidhikaṇḍa Sutta have been put between *Parittas* nos. 8 and 9. Therefore, it can be assumed that both the *Khuddaka Pāṭha* and the *Paritta* originated by expanding a common predecessor in different directions. In contrast to the *Khuddaka Pāṭha*, the *Paritta* is still widely used in Theravādin countries.

2. *Dhammapada* (The Way of Truth): A great part of the *Dhammapada* is traditionally learned by heart by every Buddhist in Theravādin countries. It consists of 423 verses arranged in 26 *vaggas*.

The *Dhammapada* was the first Pāḷi text ever critically edited in Europe by the Danish pioneer of Pāḷi studies Viggo Fausbøll (1821—1908). Many editions and still more translations have followed.

More than half of the 423 verses found in the *Dhammapada* have parallels in other collections in other Buddhist schools, frequently also in non-Buddhist texts. The interrelation of different versions has been obscured by constant contamination in the course of text transmission. This is particularly true of one of the Buddhist Sanskrit parallels, the *Udānavarga*. The *Udānavarga* was originally a text corresponding to the Pāḷi *Udāna*. By adding verses from the *Dhammapada*, it was transformed into a *Dhammapada* parallel in the course of time, which is a rare event in the evolution of Buddhist literature.

The verses of the *Dhammapada* mainly contain a series of wise observations or general truths, many of which have hardly any relationship to Buddhism proper, being, rather, of universal applicability. Linguistically, some of the verses seem to be rather old.

As in the case of the *Jātaka* tales, stories have been included (invented) by the commentators to illustrate the occasion on which the verses of the *Dhammapada* were spoken by the *Buddha*.

3. *Udāna* (Paeans of Joy): The *Udāna* is a collection, in eight *vaggas*, of eighty *udānas* "Solemn Utterances, Paeans of Joy" of the *Buddha*. They are mostly in verse, and each is accompanied by a prose account of the circumstances that called it forth:

[390] A *paritta* is a "protective discourse." What is being referred to here is a collection of twenty-two such discourses.

- Bodhi Vagga: This *vagga* describes certain events following the Enlightenment of the *Buddha*, including the famous discourse to Venerable Bāhiya that stresses living in the present moment.
- Mucalinda Vagga: This *vagga* is named after the Nāga king Mucalinda who shielded the *Buddha* with his (cobra) hood.
- Nanda Vagga: In this *vagga*, the *Buddha* convinces his half-brother Nanda of the worthlessness of worldly existence. This *vagga* also contains admonitions to the *Sangha*.
- Meghiya Vagga: In this *vagga*, ignoring the advice of the *Buddha*, Venerable Meghiya retires to a mango grove to practice meditation, but his mind is soon assailed by unhealthy thoughts. On returning to the *Buddha*, he is told that five factors should be cultivated by one with an undeveloped mind: (1) good friendship; (2) morality; (3) profitable conversation; (4) determination; and (5) insight. This *vagga* also contains the stories of Sundarī and the assault on Venerable Sāriputta by a *yakkha*.[391]
- Soṇathera Vagga: This *vagga* contains an account of a visit of King Pasenadi to the *Buddha*, the discourse to the leper Suppabuddha, the elucidation of the eight characteristics of the *sāsana*, and an account of the first year of the life of Venerable Soṇa as a *Bhikkhu*.
- Jaccandha Vagga: This *vagga* contains the *Buddha's* hint at His passing away, King Pasenadi's dialogue, and the story of the king who brought together men, blind from birth, to feel and describe an elephant — the purpose of this story is to illustrate the partial realization of truth.
- Cūḷa Vagga: This *vagga* contains the famous definition of *nibbāna* as being unborn, unbecome, unmade, uncompounded. It also contains an account of the *Buddha's* last meal and His admonition to Venerable Ānanda concerning Cunda the smith, as well as the visit to Pāṭaligāma, where the *Buddha* enunciated the five advantages of leading a pure life and the five disadvantages of not doing so.

The *Udāna* belongs to those old texts already mentioned in the *navangas*.[392] As noted above, the *Udāna* has eight *vaggas* with ten *udānas* each. The occasion for such an *udāna* is given in the prose introduction, which ends by "at this moment (the *Buddha*) made this utterance," followed by the verse. Thus, it does not seem to be

[391] In popular belief, a *yakkha* is a kind of ghost, goblin, or ogre. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 244.

[392] This refers to a division of the canon that preceded the *tipiṭaka*, and its subdivisions, such as the *nikāyas*, etc. It was called *anga* "part," of which there were three, then four, later nine, and in the Sanskrit tradition, twelve such parts. While the original division consisted of classes of texts, names of individual texts, such as *Itivuttaka*, were added in the course of time as the very early Buddhist literature began to grow. Soon, the use of the *anga* division seems to have been abandoned in favor of the *piṭaka* division. In the account of the First Council, only the subdivision of what later became the *tipiṭaka*, *nikāya* "collection of texts," is mentioned. For more information, cf. Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 7—8.

impossible that there once was an *Udāna* having only verses such as those in the Sanskrit *Udānavarga*.

About one quarter of the prose texts have a parallel in other parts of the canon, and there seems to be some special affinity to *Vinaya* texts. Some of the concepts developed in the *Udāna* are fairly old and have counterparts in both Jainism and the Upanishads.

The formula at the end of the first *vagga* (*Udāna* I 10) *ayaṁ pi udāno vutto bhagavatā iti me sutaṁ* (*Udāna* 9, 9), "this utterance, too, was spoken by the Blessed One; thus have I heard," connects this text to the *Itivuttaka*. Although this phrase is preserved only here, it may have been the conclusion of all of the *udānas* at one time. For, the Commentary explains it as the end of the very first section (*Udāna* I 1), where it is no longer extant in the text, and states that it is found here only "in some books."

4. *Itivuttaka* ("Thus Said" Discourses): The *Itivuttaka* is a collection of 122 short *suttas* in four *nipātas*, each accompanied with verses. The collection takes its name from the words usually introducing each set of verses: *iti vuccati* "thus, it is said." The *Itivuttaka* contains the ethical teachings of the *Buddha*.

- Ekaka Nipāta: This *nipāta* contains three *vaggas*. Lust, ill will, delusion, wrath, spite, pride, ignorance, craving, schism, lying, and stinginess are condemned, and mindfulness, association with the wise, concord, mental peace, happiness, diligence, generosity, and loving-kindness are praised.
- Duka Nipāta: This *nipāta* contains two *vaggas*, elucidating guarding the sense-doors and moderation in eating, skillful actions, healthy habits and correct views, serenity and seclusion, shame and dread, the two aspects of *nibbāna*,[393] and the virtues of leading an energetic ascetic life.
- Tika Nipāta: This *nipāta* contains five *vaggas*, categorizing factors that are threefold: evil roots, elements, feelings, thirsts, cankers, etc., and proclaiming the ideal life of a *Bhikkhu*.
- Catukka Nipāta: This *nipāta* categorizes factors that are fourfold: necessities of a *Bhikkhu*, the Four Noble Truths, etc., and emphasizes the purity of mind for a *Bhikkhu*.

[393] The two aspects of *nibbāna* are: (1) the full extinction of defilements (*kilesa*), that is, "*nibbāna* WITH the groups of existence still remaining" (*sa upādi sesa nibbāna*), which takes place at the attainment of Arahantship, or perfect holiness; and (2) the full extinction of the groups of existence (the aggregates) (*khandha-parinibbāna*), that is "*nibbāna* WITHOUT the groups of existence still remaining" (*an upādi sesa nibbāna*), in other words, the coming to rest, or rather "the no-more-continuing," of the psychophysical process of existence; this takes place at the death of an *Arahant*. Sometimes, both aspects take place simultaneously, that is, at the death of the *Arahant*. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 124.

The *Itivuttaka* is similar to the *Udāna*, and both texts are always mentioned side by side in the list of *navanga*. In contrast to the *Udāna*, the prose and verse of the *Itivuttaka* form a conceptual unit, which brings these *suttas* near to the *Sagātha-vagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*. The text is numerically arranged from *Eka-* to *Catukka-Nipāta*, which are subdivided into *vaggas* of about ten *suttas*.

It is noted in the Commentary that no place names are identified. The reason given is that all of the *suttas* were spoken at Kosambī and heard by the lay woman Khujjuttarā. If there is any truth in this tradition, which cannot be traced back beyond Dhammapāla's commentary, then it could have been collected and formalized in Kosambī in a way typical for this place, in contrast perhaps to, say, Sāvatthī, where *evaṁ me suttaṁ* was preferred. This, however, remains highly speculative.

At the end of the *Itivuttaka*, from *Tika Nipāta*, *Vagga* 4, onwards, the systematic formalization of *suttas* is discontinued. Therefore, it has been suggested that *Vagga* 4,[394] which draws material from the *Anguttara Nikāya*, is younger than the rest of this perhaps very old text.

5. *Sutta Nipāta* (Collected Discourses): The *Sutta Nipāta* comprises five *vaggas*, containing 71 *suttas* in all. The *suttas*, each containing from eight to fifty verses, are in verse with introductions in either verse or prose.[395]

1. Uraga Vagga (The Division of the Snake)

1. Uraga Sutta (The Snake's Skin): The *Bhikkhu* who discards all human passions — anger, hatred, craving, etc. — and is free from delusion and fear, is compared to a snake that has shed its skin.
2. Dhaniya Sutta (Dhaniya the Herdsman): The complacent "security" of a worldling is compared with the genuine security of the *Buddha*.
3. Khaggavisāṇa Sutta (The Rhinoceros Horn): The wandering life of a *Bhikkhu* is praised — family and social ties are to be avoided in view of their saṁsāric attachments, excepting the "good friend"[396] (*kalyāṇa mitta*).
4. Kasibhāradvāja Sutta (The Farmer Bhāradvāja): Socially useful or mundane labor is contrasted with the no less important efforts of the *Buddha* striving for *nibbāna*.

[394] This *Vagga* is not found in the Chinese translation.

[395] Venerable Hammalawa Saddhatissa's translation of the *Sutta Nipāta* (London: Curzon Press [1985]) has also been consulted for clarification concerning the content of individual *suttas*.

[396] A *kalyāṇa mitta* "a noble (or good) friend" is one who is the mentor and friend of his pupil, wishing for the pupil's welfare and concerned about his or her spiritual progress. A *kalyāṇa mitta* is one who teaches him or her meditation, who teaches him or her *Dhamma*, who guides him or her on their spiritual journey, encouraging what is wholesome, noble, and beneficial and discouraging what is not wholesome, not noble, and not beneficial, in accordance with Buddhist principles. A *kalyāṇa mitta*, himself or herself, leads an exemplary life by putting into practice the teachings and forsaking lust, hatred, and false views — truly knowing, with a disciplined mind, clinging to nothing either in this life or the next.

5. Cunda Sutta (Cunda the Smith): The *Buddha* enumerates four kinds of *samaṇas*: (1) a *Buddha*, (2) an *Arahant*, (3) a conscientious *Bhikkhu*, and (4) a fraudulent *Bhikkhu*.
6. Parābhava Sutta (Downfall): The "causes of personal downfall" in the moral and spiritual domains are enumerated.
7. Vasala or Aggika Bhāradvāja Sutta (The Outcast): In refutation of the charge "outcast," the *Buddha* explains that it is by actions, not lineage, that one becomes an outcast or a Brahmin.
8. Mettā Sutta (Discourse on Loving-Kindness): The constituents of the practice of loving-kindness (*mettā*) towards all beings.
9. Hemavata Sutta (Sātāgira and Hemavata): Here, two *yakkhas* who have their doubts about the qualities of the *Buddha* have their doubts resolved by Him. The *Buddha* continues by describing the path of deliverance from death.
10. Āḷavaka Sutta (Āḷavaka): The *Buddha* answers the questions of the *yakkha* Āḷavaka concerning happiness, understanding, and the path to *nibbāna*.
11. Vijava Sutta (Victory over Delusion): An analysis of the body into its (impure) constituent parts and the mention of the *Bhikkhu* who attains *nibbāna* through understanding the body's true nature.
12. Muni Sutta (The Sage): The idealistic conception of a *muni* "sage" who leads a solitary life freed from the passions.

2. Cūḷa Vagga (The Shorter Division)

1. Ratana Sutta (Jewels Discourse): A hymn to the Three Jewels: The *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*.
2. Āmagandha Sutta (Stench): The Buddha Kassapa refutes the brahmanic view of defilement through eating meat and states that defilement can only come about through an evil mind and corresponding actions.
3. Hiri Sutta (Shame): A dissertation on the nature of true friendship.
4. Mahāmangala Sutta (The Auspicious Performance): Thirty-eight blessings are enumerated in leading a pure life — starting with basic ethical injunctions and culminating in the realization of *nibbāna*.
5. Sūciloma Sutta (Sūciloma): In reply to the threatening attitude of the *yakkha* Sūciloma, the *Buddha* states that passion, hatred, doubt, etc., originate with the body, with desire, and with the concept of self.
6. Dhammacariya Sutta (The Good Life): A *Bhikkhu* should lead a just and pure life and should avoid those of a quarrelsome nature and those who are slaves of desire.
7. Brāhmaṇadhammika Sutta (The Good Conduct of the Brahmins): The *Buddha* explains to some old and wealthy Brahmins the high moral standards of their ancestors and how they declined following their greed for the king's wealth. As a result, they induced the king to offer animal sacrifice, etc., in order to acquire wealth and thus lost knowledge of the *Dhamma*.

8. Nāva Sutta (The Boat): Taking heed of the quality of the teacher, one should go to a learned and intelligent person in order to acquire a thorough knowledge of *Dhamma*.
9. Kiṁsīla Sutta (Right Conduct): This *sutta* deals with the path of a conscientious lay disciple. *Dhamma* should be one's first and last concern.
10. Uṭṭhāna Sutta (Arousing): An attack on idleness and laziness. Pierced by the arrow of suffering, one should not rest until all desire is eliminated.
11. Rāhula Sutta (Rāhula): The *Buddha* advises His son, the novice Rāhula, to respect those who are wise and to associate with them in order to live up to the principles of a recluse.
12. Vangīsa Sutta (Vangīsa): The *Buddha* assures Vangīsa that his late teacher, Nigrodhakappa, attained *nibbāna*.
13. Sammāparibbājanīya Sutta (The Correct Homeless Life): The correct path to be followed by a conscientious *Bhikkhu* disciple: non-attachment, eradication of the passions, understanding the nature of cyclic existence (*saṁsāra*).
14. Dhammika Sutta (Dhammika): The *Buddha* explains to the lay disciple Dhammika the respective duties of a *Bhikkhu* and a lay person, the latter being expected to keep the Five Precepts and observe *Uposatha* days.

3. Mahā Vagga (The Greater Division)

1. Pabbajjā Sutta (The Going Forth): King Bimbisāra of Magadha tempts the *Buddha* by offering to bestow wealth and power upon Him and asks about His lineage. The *Buddha* tells of His birth among the Sākyans of Kosala and that He has seen through the illusive nature of sensory pleasures.
2. Padhāna Sutta (The Striving): The graphic description of Māra's temptations immediately prior to the *Buddha's* Enlightenment.
3. Subhāsita Sutta (Good Words): The language of *Bhikkhus* should be well-spoken, pleasing, correct, and true.
4. Pūraḷāsa[397] Sutta (The Sacrificial Cake): The *Buddha* explains to the Brahmin Sundarika how one becomes worthy of the honor of receiving an offering.
5. Māgha Sutta (Māgha): The *Buddha* explains to the lay person Māgha how one becomes worthy of the honor of receiving an offering and elucidates the various kinds of blessings from offerings.
6. Sabhiya Sutta (Sabhiya): Sabhiya, a wandering ascetic, could not obtain answers to his questions from the six most famous teachers of the time. Hence, he approaches the *Buddha* and becomes a disciple after the *Buddha* satisfactorily answers his questions.
7. Sela Sutta (Sela): The Brahmin Sela converses with the *Buddha* and is converted along with his three hundred followers.

[397] This is also called the Sundarika-Bhāradvāja Sutta.

8. Salla Sutta (The Dart): Life is short, and all are subject to death, but the wise, who understand the nature of life, have no fears.
9. Vāseṭṭha Sutta (Vāseṭṭha): Two young men, Bhāradvāja and Vāseṭṭha, discuss the question of how one becomes a Brahmin: Bhāradvāja maintains that one is a Brahmin by birth, but Vāseṭṭha states that one becomes a Brahmin only through actions. The *Buddha* subsequently confirms that the latter view is correct.
10. Kokāliya Sutta (Kokāliya): The monk Kokāliya falsely accuses Venerables Sāriputta and Moggallāna of harboring evil desires. Subsequently, Kokāliya endures a painful end — through death and rebirth in a woeful state. The *Buddha* then enumerates the different hell realms and describes the punishment for slandering and backbiting.
11. Nālaka Sutta (Nālaka): An account of the sage Asita's prediction concerning the future Buddha Gotama. The *Buddha* explains the highest state of wisdom to Asita's nephew Nālaka.
12. Dvayatānupassanā Sutta (Origination and Cessation [of Suffering]): Suffering arises from grasping, ignorance, the five aggregates, desire, attachment, effort, food, etc.

4. Aṭṭhaka Vagga (The Division of the Eights)

1. Kāma Sutta (Sensory Pleasures): To avoid the unpleasant effects, one should always be thoughtful and avoid sensory pleasures. Abandoning them leads to the farther shore (*nibbāna*).
2. Guhaṭṭhaka Sutta (The Cave): In addition to the above, physical existence should also not be clung to if one is keen on attaining deliverance from *saṁsāra*.
3. Duṭṭhaṭṭhaka Sutta (Corruption): One who praises his own virtue and is tied to dogmatic views (which differ from person to person and sect to sect) lives a constricted life.[398] The sage,[399] however, remains self-effacing and independent of philosophical systems.
4. Suddhaṭṭhaka Sutta (Purity): Knowledge of philosophical systems cannot purify one, there being the tendency to become attached to one's views and not let go of desire, thus, never attaining inward peace. The wise, however, are not misled by passion and do not cling to anything in *saṁsāra*.
5. Paramaṭṭhaka Sutta (Perfection): One should not cling to dogmatic views, seeing everything else as inferior. A true Brahmin does not and attains *nibbāna*.
6. Jarā Sutta (Decay): From selfishness come greed and regrets. The ideal *Bhikkhu*, a "homeless one," is independent and does not seek purification through others.
7. Tissa Metteyya Sutta (Tissa Metteyya): The *Buddha* elucidates the kinds of undesirable effects that follow from sensory desire.

[398] Intolerant, inflexible, biased, narrow-minded, uncompromising, etc.
[399] One who is wise, prudent, flexible, open-minded, etc.

8. Pasūra Sutta (Disputation): The folly of debates where both sides insult or deride each other. Those who are defeated become resentful. Consequently, purification cannot result from such activity.
9. Māgandiya Sutta (Māgandiya): Again, the *Buddha* emphasizes to Māgandiya, a believer in purity through philosophy, that purity can result only from inner peace.
10. Purābheda Sutta (Qualities of a Sage): The conduct and characteristics of a true sage: freedom from craving, anger, desire, passion, and attachment, and always calm, thoughtful, and mentally equipoised.
11. Kalahavivāda Sutta (Disputes and Contention): Arguments and disputes arise from deeply held views, etc.
12. Cūḷaviyūha Sutta (Minor Causes of Contention): A description of the different philosophical schools, all contradicting one another without realizing that Truth is one.
13. Mahāviyūha Sutta (Major Causes of Contention): Philosophers only praise themselves and criticize others, but a true Brahmin remains indifferent to such dubious intellectual attainment and is thus calm and peaceful.
14. Tuvaṭaka Sutta (The Way to Bliss): The *Bhikkhu* should sever the root of evil and cravings, learn the *Dhamma*, be calm and meditative, avoid talking, indolence, etc., and strictly follow his prescribed duties.
15. Attadaṇḍa Sutta (Violent Conduct): The sage should be truthful, not deceitful, sober, free from greed and slander, energetic, and without desire for name and fame.
16. Sāriputta Sutta (Sāriputta): Again, this time in answer to Venerable Sāriputta's inquiry, the *Buddha* lays down the principles that should govern the life of a *Bhikkhu*.

5. Pārāyaṇa Vagga (The Division of the Way to the Beyond)

This division begins with a long prologue (*vatthugāthā*), which is followed by a series of dialogues (*pucchā*) between the *Buddha* and sixteen Brahmins: Ajita, Tissa Metteyya, Puṇṇaka, Mettagū, Dhotaka, Upasīva, Nanda, Hemaka, Todeyya, Kappa, Jatukaṇṇi, Bhadrāvudha, Udaya, Posāla, Mogharāja, and Pingiya. The dialogues all stress the necessity of eradicating desire, greed, attachment, philosophical views, sensory pleasures, and indolence, and of remaining aloof, independent, calm, mindful, and firm in *Dhamma* — in order to attain *nibbāna*. Finally, the *Pārāyaṇavagga* ends with an epilogue and Pingiya's praises of the way to the beyond.

The *Sutta Nipāta* begins with a collection of verses in the *Uragavagga* that could have also been included in the *Dhammapada*. The second text is the famous dialogue of the *Buddha* and the herdsman Dhaniya "the rich," who is happy with the life of a householder, while the *Buddha* praises the freedom He gained by leaving His belongings behind. The person speaking a verse is indicated, for example, by *iti*

Dhaniyo gopo "thus Dhaniya the herdsman," which, according to the Commentary, was introduced by the *sangītikāras* "those participating in the (First) Council." Similarly, indications are given in the Indian epic the *Mahābhārata* such as *Bṛhadaśva uvāca* "Bṛhadaśva said." This seems to be alien to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, however.

The *Cūḷavagga* contains the Ratana Sutta and Mangala Sutta, which have also been included in the *Khuddaka Pāṭha*, together with the Mettā Sutta.

The first two texts in the *Mahāvagga* are verses referring to the life of the *Buddha*, describing His *pabbajjā* "leaving home to become an ascetic" and His struggle with Māra.

Other texts are true *suttas*, such as the Sela Sutta or the Vāseṭṭha Sutta, which appear in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (nos. 92 and 98, respectively) as well. Further, many parallels are found in the structurally similar *Sagāthavagga* of the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, such as the *Vangīsasaṁyutta*, which contains the first part of the verses attributed to Vangīsa in the *Theragāthā*, while the second part of these verses is shared with the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* II 12 Vangīsa Sutta.

There are also parallels outside of the Theravādin canon, and a reference probably to a *Sutta Nipāta* text on the Asokan inscriptions, if the *munigāthā* and the *moneyasutta* mentioned on the Bairāṭ edict are really *Sutta Nipāta* I 12 Muni Sutta.

The *munigāthā* are also mentioned in an enumeration of texts in *Divyāvadāna* 20, 23, and following, and 35, 1, together with the *arthavargīyāṇi sūtrāṇi*, which may correspond to *Sutta Nipāta* IV *Aṭṭhakavagga*.

The last two *vaggas*, *Sutta Nipāta* IV *Aṭṭhakavagga* and V *Pārāyaṇavagga*, seem to be very old texts. Both are quoted in other parts of the canon, and both include rather early concepts of the Teaching. The fact that they are quoted in the *Divyāvadāna*, and that the *Niddesa* is a commentary on them, seems to indicate that both these *vaggas* enjoyed an existence as independent texts for quite some time. It seems to be a typical feature of Theravādin Buddhism to include finally all texts in some collection or other, not tolerating separate texts, as do other schools.[400]

In the *Niddesa*, both these *vaggas* are embedded in a Commentary similar to the Pātimokkha Sutta in the *Vinaya Vibhanga*.

The *Sutta Nipāta* as a whole contains rather variegated texts collected perhaps for purposes similar to the *Khuddaka Pāṭha*. Another feature shared with the *Khuddaka Pāṭha* are the texts gleaned from other parts of the canon. Therefore, the *Sutta Nipāta* may be considered, if one wants to speculate, some kind of early ritual handbook that has some parts in common with the *Khuddaka Pāṭha*.

6. *Vimāna Vatthu* (Stories of Celestial Mansions): This text contains eighty-five poems grouped in seven *vaggas* on merit and rebirth in the celestial realms.

The *Vimāna Vatthu* and *Peta Vatthu* belong together, as witnessed by their form, contents, and mediocre literary quality. The *Vimāna Vatthu* is the longer of

[400] Texts outside the canon are considered apocryphal.

the two, with seven *vaggas*, 85 *vatthus*, and 1,282 verses, while the *Peta Vatthu* has four *vaggas* with 51 *vatthus* and only 814 verses.

Both texts, though, are of some importance for popular religion, for they deal with stories of people who have died and either enjoy their good deeds in *vimānas* ("celestial mansions") or suffer for their bad deeds as *petas* ("hungry ghosts"). Particularly, if relatives still living do not help by offering food etc., the hungry ghosts are subject to hunger and other deprivations. Thus, these texts, which possess a Commentary giving the frame story for the verses, are clearly aimed at lay people.

The age of the different parts of the *Vimāna Vatthu* and *Peta Vatthu* does not seem to be uniform. Some *vatthus* are considered later additions, even within the Theravādin tradition, being only included in the canon during the Second Council.

7. *Peta Vatthu* (Stories of *Peta*s): The *Peta Vatthu* contains fifty-one poems grouped in four *vaggas* on rebirth as "hungry ghosts" (*peta*[401]) through demeritorious actions.

8. *Theragāthā* (Psalms of the Brothers): This could also be translated as "Verses of the Elders (*thera*)." The *Theragāthā* contains 107 poems (1,279 *gāthās*).

The *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* contain verses spoken by monks and nuns, respectively. Therefore, they cannot be considered *Buddhavacana*, "the word of the *Buddha*."

Both texts form a unit and have a common Commentary. The longer one is the *Theragāthā*, comprising 1,279 (or, according to the tradition, 1,360) verses. Counting the numbers given in the *uddānas* "summaries" at the end of the *nipātas* adds up to a third figure: 1,294 verses. The reason for this confusion seems to be, in part, a differing division of the verses, and, in part, carelessness. The number of Elders who are supposed to have spoken these verses is unanimously 264. No figures for the *Therīgāthā* are available in the Commentary. At the end of the text, 494 verses and 101 nuns are counted. Again, the *uddānas* list 116 nuns and 494 verses. The actual number of nuns who spoke the verses is only 73.

Both collections are divided into *nipātas*, arranged according to numerical principles: the first *nipāta* contains single verses, the second, groups of two, etc., up to fourteen, then follow groups of twenty to seventy, and, finally, the *Mahānipāta*, with long sequences of verses. Thus, the *Theragāthā* has 21 *nipātas* and the *Therīgāthā* 16, from one to forty verses, and a *Mahānipāta*. No systematic order can be recognized within the *nipātas*. Only occasionally is there a connection by key words, such as *sukha* "happiness, joy."

[401] Sanskrit *preta*, literally, "departed spirit, wandering ghost, hungry ghost." *Petas* are not disembodied spirits or ghosts. They possess deformed physical bodies of varying size and are generally invisible to the naked eye. They have no planes of their own but live in forests, dirty surroundings, etc., and are absolutely devoid of happiness. In addition to the *Peta Vatthu*, which deals exclusively with the stories of these unfortunate beings, the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* contains some interesting accounts of *petas*.

Although *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* are mostly parallel in structure and contents, there are minor differences too. While all verses of the *Theragāthā* are clearly ascribed to a particular monk, some of the *Therīgāthā* verses are anonymous or are only connected to, but not spoken by, a certain nun. Sometimes, the verses are not even connected to a nun at all.

A peculiarity of the *Therīgāthā* are the vocatives in the verses: The nun is either addressed by someone, or she addresses herself, which is the case cannot be decided.

Verses may be attributed to a certain person on account of a name or a key word occurring in a verse. It is not known whether this is based upon any real memory. Sometimes, the attribution is not uniform, for some verses are connected to different persons in both the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* and in the *Apadāna*.

Quite a few verses are also attributed to the same monks in other parts of the canon, and there are collections of verses that could have been included into the *Theragāthā*, such as those in the eighth chapter of the *Milindapañha*, but were not for some reason or other.

The sources from which the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* have been compiled are not known. Probably, both collections have grown over a long period, slowly absorbing verses commemorating monks or nuns living at quite different times, for, although the Commentary states that Venerable Ānanda recited these collections at the First Council, other verses are supposed to be much younger, even by the tradition, and as having been added on the occasion of the Second Council, or still later, at the time of the Third Council under Asoka. So far, the chronology of the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* has not attracted much attention.

The verses of the monks and nuns allow a unique glimpse at very early Indian poetry, otherwise completely lost. This has been rightly emphasized by S. Lienhard in a fundamental article, where he was able to demonstrate that these verses mirror the secular poetry of their times and that they are partly love lyrics adapted to religious purposes, if secular imagery is replaced by religious imagery. Poetical figures (*alaṁkāra*) known from much later Indian poetry are found here for the first time.

The form of these single stanzas is not only the precursor of later *muktaka*-poetry, as found in the Māhārāṣṭrī verses of Hāla (2nd/3rd century CE), it is also completely different from anything found in the Vedic literature. This, again, demonstrates the very abrupt break between the Vedic and Middle Indic traditions, and it gives a vague idea of the highly valuable and beautiful poetry that existed in ancient India.

A classification of poets, which is again unique, found in the Theravādin canon further underlines that, at an early date, there were even attempts to build a theory on poetics.

Another aspect particularly of the *Therīgāthā* no less valuable for cultural history is the fact that this is the first surviving poetry supposed to have been composed by women in India, sometimes in very famous poetical verses such as the

lament of Ambapālī, the courtesan turned nun, which speak about the decay of her beauty, sometimes with grim humor, on the occasion of getting rid of an unpleasant husband. The poetically excellent quality of these verses is not matched by Indian poetesses of later periods.

9. *Therīgāthā* (Psalms of the Sisters): This could also be translated as "Verses of the Elder Nuns (*therī*)." The *Therīgāthā* contains 73 poems (522 *gāthās*).

10. *Jātaka* (Birth Stories of the *Bodhisatta*): The *Jātaka* is a collection of 547 stories purporting to be accounts of the lives of the Buddha Gotama. The *Nidānakathā*, or "Story of the Lineage," is an introductory commentary that details the life of the *Buddha* up to the opening of the Jetavana monastery at Sāvatthī and also His lives under preceding *Buddhas*.

The collection of *Jātakas* consists roughly of 2,500 verses numerically arranged in the *Eka-* to *Terasa-Nipātas* according to the number of verses in every single *Jātaka* from 1 to 13. Then follows a *Pakiṇṇaka-Nipāta* "miscellaneous verses," twenty-to-eighty *Nipāta*, and the *Mahānipāta* with ten long *Jātakas*, among them the Vessantara Jātaka.

The total number of *Jātakas* was 550, but only 547 survive. The names and numbers of the three lost *Jātakas* are still known: 497, Velāma Jātaka; 498, Mahāgovinda Jātaka; and 499, Sumedhapaṇḍita Jātaka, though their content is lost. Reliefs extant in Myanmar (Burma) depicting a single scene of each *Jātaka* do not give a clue about the contents.

550 *Jātakas* are only known to have existed in Myanmar once, where they were probably brought from Kāñcī in South India. This may also be the reason why the *Jātaka* prose, as handed down in Myanmar, is a recension of its own, which is unique in the tradition of Pāḷi literature, and independent from the Śri Lankan.

It is not unlikely, though, that exactly 550 *Jātakas* were known in Śri Lanka as well. For this number is mentioned at *Sumangalavilāsinī* 612, 19, *Papañcasūdanī* 106, 21, and *Atthasālinī* 31, 34. During the 14th century, the Sinhalese King Parakkamabāhu IV, appointed a monk from South India as his spiritual preceptor (*rājaguru*) and heard from him 550 *Jātakas* (*Mahāvaṁsa* XC 82). It is perhaps not by chance that this number is here again connected with South India.

As the title indicates, these verses refer to previous lives of the *Buddha* as a *Bodhisatta*, although frequently no connection to Buddhism can be found in the verses. They are developed into a *Jātaka* only by means of an accompanying prose story. The story, however, does not enjoy canonical status, as do the verses, but is considered a Commentary. In spite of this, it is necessary also to look at the *Jātakaatthavaṇṇanā* "Explanation of the Meaning of the *Jātakas*" to understand them.

A long introduction called *Nidānakathā* (*Jātaka* I 2, 1—94, 28) precedes the *Jātakas* proper. Here, the life of the *Buddha* is told in prose interspersed with verses drawn from the *Buddhavaṁsa*.

The *Nidānakathā* is divided into three chapters. The *Dūrenidāna* "Cause, Origin of the Remote Past" tells the story from the time of the previous Buddha Dīpaṁkāra, who declares that Sumedha will be a future *Buddha*; the *Avidūrenidāna* "Cause, Origin in the not so Remote Past" refers to the time from the birth of the *Bodhisatta* in the Tusita Heaven to the Enlightenment; and the *Santikenidāna* "Cause, Origin in the Near Past" is devoted to the time up to the *parinibbāna*. At the end, the story of the gift of the Jetavana by Anāthapiṇḍika is told; it is in the Jetavana that most *Jātakas* are supposed to have been spoken by the *Buddha*. The *Nidānakathā* is the most important Theravādin source for information on the life of the *Buddha*.

All *Jātakas* have a strict formal structure. The first quarter of the first verse serves as a headline. The beginning of the *Jātaka* is called *paccuppannavatthu* "story of the present," which refers to some event at the time of the *Buddha*, who then demonstrates the ultimate origin of the event by means of the *atītavatthu* 'story of the past." This really is the *Jātaka* that contains the *gāthā* "verse(s)," which are accompanied by a word for word commentary called *veyyākaraṇa*. At the end, the story of the past and the one of the present are connected in the *samodhāna* "connection."

The *Jātaka* prose has a long history. Some *Jātakas* are found already in the canon itself, however, in a different wording. More important is the different form. For, instead of *atīte* "in the past" that is necessarily put at the beginning of the Theravādin *Jātakas*, older texts, such as the stories in the *Sagāthavagga*, use *bhūta-pubbaṁ* (*Saṁyutta Nikāya* I 216, 10, etc.) "once upon a time." In the same way, the end of the *Jātakas* found in the canon is different. Therefore, the Theravādins have modernized their *Jātaka* texts in contrast to other Buddhist schools,[402] where the old beginning and end of the *Jātakas* have been kept, and, consequently, the form of a *Jātaka* is unique for different Buddhist schools.

Because all *Jātakas* must have been accompanied by prose from the very beginning, though ancient prose texts are available only for very few *Jātakas*, it has been surmised that this prose was not necessarily transmitted in a fixed wording. It is assumed that the story as such has been attached to a verse and was told in the words of the respective narrator. This particular type of literature, with a given verse loosely surrounded by prose, is called an *ākhyāna* "narrative" and can be traced back perhaps even to the Rig-Veda.

The prose, however, is essential only for the first 500 *Jātakas*. From the *Vīsatinipāta* "division with twenty (verses)" onwards, a new type of *Jātaka* begins — these are small epics long enough to be understood without any help from a prose text. The contents of some of these longer *Jātakas* are found, at the same time, in the famous Sanskrit epics, the *Mahābhārata* or the *Rāmāyaṇa*. They are of utmost

[402] Different *Jātaka* forms for the Theravādin, Mūlasarvāstivādin, and Mahāsāṁgikalokottaravādin Schools can be distinguished.

importance beyond Theravāda for the literary history, particularly of the epics in ancient India.

Thus, the *Jātaka* collection can be divided into two parts: the first comprises *Jātakas* nos. 1—496 (or nos. 1—499, if the three lost *Jātakas* are counted) or *Ekanipāta* to *Pakiṇṇakanipāta*. A *Pakiṇṇaka* usually marks the end of a text, and, here, it contains *Jātakas* with 23, 25, or even 47 verses, thus contradicting the numerical arrangement, which continues with the *Vīsatinipāta* "division of twenty," if this is not the original end of a collection. If this should be true, then it makes good sense that the *Niddesa* II 80, 4 gives the number of *Jātakas* as 500 and that Fǎxiǎn[403] saw 500 representations of *Jātakas* when a procession with the tooth relic moved to the Abhayagirivihāra in the fifth century CE. Consequently, it is not unlikely that the Theravādin *Jātakas* are a composite collection consisting of 500 sets of verses plus fifty small epics.

Whether there are traces of a split tradition mirrored in the *Jātakas* of a form different from the Theravādin standard and surviving only in the *Aṭṭhakathā* is an open question.

The narratives found in the *Jātaka* prose are mostly fables, where the *Bodhisatta* is reborn as an animal, or fairy tales. The *Jātaka* is, indeed, one of the most important collections of such tales to have spread over large parts of Asia and Europe, far beyond Buddhism.

The longest of the epics and the most famous *Jātaka* is the Vessantara Jātaka, with 786 verses. It enjoys an immense popularity and is, to this day, recited in Pāḷi from time to time in Theravādin countries. It relates the last rebirth of the *Bodhisatta*, in which he accomplished the perfection of giving away all his belongings (*dānaparamitā*) before he ascends to the Tusita Heaven, from which he later enters his last existence by descending to this world.

11. *Niddesa* (Expositions): The *Niddesa* is divided into two parts: (1) *Mahāniddesa*, a commentary on the *Aṭṭhakavagga* of the *Sutta Nipāta*, and (2) *Cūḷanidessa*, a commentary on the *Pārāyaṇavagga* and the Khaggavisāṇa Sutta (The Rhinoceros Horn), also of the *Sutta Nipāta*. The *Niddesa* is itself commented on in the *Saddhammapajjotikā* of Upasena and is there attributed to Venerable Sāriputta.

Both *Niddesas* really form one text, which is called *Suttaniddesa* "Explanation of *Suttas*" at the end of both the *Mahāniddesa* and the *Cūḷanidessa*. The split into "great" and "small" *Niddesa* seems to be attested to first in a subcommentary on the *Vinaya* of the 12th century.

The fact that only select parts of the *Sutta Nipāta* are explained (see above) confirms their existence as originally separate texts.

[403] Wade-Giles romanization Fa-hsien, Chinese Buddhist monk whose pilgrimage to India in 402 CE initiated Sino-Indian relations and whose writings give important information about early Buddhism. After his return to China, he translated the many Sanskrit Buddhist texts he had brought back with him into Chinese. (This footnote is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

This is the only Commentary besides the *Suttavibhanga* that has been incorporated into the canon. An interesting remark on the history of the *Niddesa* is found in the *Vinaya* Commentary, where it is reported that it was nearly lost — for a certain period of time, only a single monk named Mahārakkhita still knew it by heart.

The *Niddesa* uses long series of synonyms to explain words occurring in *Sutta Nipāta* verses, and often uses formulas found in the canon as material. These formulas, which originally helped monks memorize the texts, thus gain a new function as explicative formulas.

The *Niddesa* occasionally quotes directly from the canon, but only from the *Sutta Piṭaka*. It is interesting that not all quotations marked as such in the text can be verified.

The age of the *Niddesa* has been discussed at great length by Sylvain Lévi (1863—1935) in 1925, who arrived at a date in the second century CE, arguing from the geographical horizon of the text. This date has recently been disputed by Norman (in 1983), who argues in favor of a much earlier date at the time of Asoka. The question of dating needs reexamination. It is, however, certain that the *Niddesa* does not belong to the old canonical texts and that a date after Asoka does not seem unlikely.

12. *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (Book on Analytical Knowledge[404]): The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* is a detailed analysis of concepts and practices already mentioned in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Dīgha*, *Saṁyutta*, and *Anguttara Nikāyas*. It is divided into three sections: (1) *Mahā Vagga*, (2) *Yuganaddha Vagga*, and (3) *Paññā Vagga*, each *vagga* containing ten topics (*kathā*).

- *Mahā Vagga* (Great Division): The *Mahā Vagga* deals with: (1) knowledge of impermanence and the suffering of compounded things; (2) the Four Noble Truths; (3) Dependent Origination; (4) the four planes of existence; (5) false views; (6) the Five Faculties; (7) the three aspects of *nibbāna*; (8) *kamma-vipāka*; and (9) the Four Paths to *nibbāna*.
- *Yuganaddha Vagga* (Coupling Division): The *Yuganaddha Vagga* deals with: (1) the Seven Factors of Enlightenment; (2) the Four Foundations of Mindfulness; (3) the Four Right Efforts; (4) the Four Powers (will, energy, thought, and investigation); (5) the Noble Eightfold Path; (6) the four fruits of a monk's life (*patticariya*) and *nibbāna*; and (7) sixty-eight potentialities.
- *Paññā Vagga* (Wisdom Division): The *Paññā Vagga* deals with: (1) eight kinds of conduct (*cariya*); (2) postures (walking, sitting, standing, and lying down); (3) sense organs; (4) mindfulness; (5) concentration (the meditative absorptions [*jhānas*]); (6) the Four Noble Truths; (7) the Four Paths to *nibbāna*; (8) the four fruits of a monk's life; and (9) the promotion of the world's welfare.

[404] This can also be translated as "Path of Discrimination."

The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* is the only *Abhidhamma* text that has found its way into the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, probably because it was composed too late (perhaps 2nd century CE) to be included in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, which was already closed, while the end of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* always remained open for additions.

As with the *Niddesa*, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* is also ascribed to Venerable Sāriputta, who talks about four *paṭisambhidās*[405] in the *Catukka Nipāta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* II 160, 19—37.

As a true *Abhidhamma* text, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* begins with a *mātikā* "summary" containing seventy-three different aspects on *ñāṇa* "knowledge," which are then explained in detail. The second chapter, on the other hand, begins with a series of questions to be answered in the following text, which, however, is not a dialogue.

Sometimes, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* quotes from and comments on texts from the *Anguttara Nikāya*, sometimes from the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, and sometimes from the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

The purpose of the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* may have been the first, and not very successful, attempt to systematize the *Abhidhamma* in the form of a handbook. If so, it could be a forerunner of both the *Vimuttimagga* and the *Visuddhimagga*. In contrast to these later texts, which are well organized and composed with great care, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* seems to be rather patched together.

Both the *Niddesa* and the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* were rejected by the Mahā-saṁghītika at the Second Council according to the *Dīpavaṁsa* V 37, which clearly is an anachronism. Inasmuch as both texts give an orthodox interpretation of canonical Theravādin literature, it is easy to understand why they could not possibly have been accepted by any other school.

13. *Apadāna* (Lives of *Arahants*): The *Apadāna* contains the tales, in verse, of the former lives of 550 *Bhikkhus* and 40 *Bhikkhunīs*.

The *Apadāna*, which is not recognized as canonical by the Dīghabhāṇakas, was one of the last books added to the Pāḷi Canon. It seems to be younger than the *Buddhavaṁsa*, but much older than the Commentaries. The geographical horizon seems to be similar to the one of the *Niddesa*.

The exact meaning of the title, which corresponds to Sanskrit *avadāna*, and which designates a class of literature, is not known.

[405] *Paṭisambhidā* may be translated as "analytical knowledge" or "discrimination." *Paṭisambhidā* is of four kinds: analytical knowledge pertaining to: (1) analysis of meanings "in extension" (*atthapaṭisambhidā*); (2) analysis of reasons, conditions, or causal relations (*dhammapaṭisambhidā*); (3) analysis of [meanings "in intension" as given in] definitions (*niruttipaṭisambhidā*); and (4) analysis of the intellect to which things knowable by the foregoing processes are presented (*paṭibhānapaṭisambhidā*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 162—163.

The text is divided into four parts:

1. *Buddha-apadāna*: A praise of the *Buddhas* and their respective fields.
2. *Paccekabuddha-apadāna*: The *Buddha* answers Venerable Ānanda's questions about those *Buddhas* who gained Enlightenment but did not teach.
3. *Thera-apadāna*: Fifty-five *vaggas* of ten *Apadānas*, each spoken by monks.
4. *Therī-apadāna*: Four *vaggas* of ten *Apadānas*, each spoken by nuns.

The original number of *Thera Apadānas* was 550, which was reduced to 547, probably after three *Jātakas* were lost. The *Apadāna* describes the former lives of *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunīs*, some of whom are known to have spoken *Theragāthās* and *Therīgāthās*. Thus, the collection is a kind of supplement to the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* and, at the same time, parallel to the *Jātakas* in describing the former lives of the *Buddha*.

Three recensions of the *Apadāna* can be traced, for Dhammapāla quotes in his commentary to the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā Apadānas* in a wording different from the existing *Apadāna*, and a third recension has been used by the commentator on the *Sutta Nipāta*.

Moreover, some passages of the *Apadāna* are near to texts from other Buddhist schools: for example, *Apadāna* no. 390, *Pubbakammapiloti*, runs partially parallel to the Mūlasarvāstavādin *Anavataptagāthā*.

14. *Buddhavaṁsa* (History of the *Buddhas*[406]): The *Buddhavaṁsa* contains an account of how the *Buddha* formed the resolve to gain Enlightenment, and it gives the history of the twenty-four *Buddhas* who preceded Him.

As noted above, the *Buddhavaṁsa* is a description of the lives of twenty-four predecessors of the historical *Buddha* (Buddha Gotama[407]) in verse, beginning with Dīpaṁkara, who predicted that Sumedha would be a future *Buddha*. The first chapter is an introduction, and *Buddhavaṁsa* XXVI relates the life of the Buddha Gotama. A *Pakiṇṇakakathā* "chapter with miscellaneous matters" follows, and, again, the former *Buddhas* are enumerated, with three *Buddhas* added (Taṇhaṁkara, Medhaṁkara, and Saraṇaṁkara), and Metteyya, the future *Buddha*, mentioned. According to the Commentary, the verses were added by the participants of the First Council and are not, consequently, *Buddhavacana*.

Six predecessors of the *Buddha* were already mentioned in the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The number of twenty-four predecessors given in the *Buddhavaṁsa* is probably analogous to the corresponding number of Jain Tīrthaṁkaras.[408]

[406] This may also be translated as "Lineage of the *Buddhas*."

[407] Buddha Sākyamuni.

[408] Jainism recognizes twenty-four masters (*tīrthaṁkaras*) who have conveyed the principles of Jain belief over the centuries. The last such teacher was Mahāvīra (Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta), a contemporary of the *Buddha*, who founded Jainism as a religious community. Mahāvīra and his eleven disciples were the first

The contents of the *Buddhavaṁsa* partly overlap with the *Jātaka-nidāna*, where verses from the *Buddhavaṁsa* are quoted. The same is true for the introduction to the *Atthasālinī*.

A quotation from an otherwise unknown *Dvādasasahassabuddhavaṁsa* has recently been discovered.

15. *Cariyā Piṭaka* (Modes of Conduct): The *Cariyā Piṭaka* contains thirty-five *Jātaka* tales in verse, illustrating seven of the Ten Perfections[409] (*pāramī*, *pāramitā*): (1) generosity (*dāna*); (2) morality (*sīla*); (3) renunciation (*nekkhamma*); (4) wisdom (*paññā*); (5) energy (*viriya*); (6) patience (*khanti*); (7) truthfulness (*sacca*); (8) determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*); (9) loving-kindness (*mettā*); and (10) equanimity (*upekkhā*).

The *Cariyā Piṭaka* is the only title in the *Tipiṭaka* also containing the word *piṭaka* "basket [of conduct]." A second title is mentioned at the end of the *Cariyā Piṭaka*: *Buddhāpadānīyaṁ nāma dhammapariyāyaṁ*, which brings this text near to the *Apadāna*.

At the same time, the *Cariyā Piṭaka* is closely connected to the *Buddhavaṁsa*. In the introduction, Venerable Sāriputta asks the *Buddha* about His resolve to become a *Buddha* (*Buddhabhāvāya abhinīhāra*) and about the ten perfections. The first question is answered in the *Buddhavaṁsa*, as clearly seen in the Commentary, and the second in the *Cariyā Piṭaka*, although only six perfections are actually treated in the *Cariyā Piṭaka*. This is supplemented by a long appendix to the Commentary, where all ten perfections are explained.

The *Cariyā Piṭaka* is divided into three sections and contains thirty-five stories from the former lives of the *Buddha* as a *Bodhisatta*. Consequently, the *Cariyā Piṭaka* is near to the *Jātakas*, where thirty-two of the thirty-five stories can be traced. In the *Cariyā Piṭaka*, however, the verses have been provided with a strong Buddhist touch often missing in the *Jātaka* verses. Therefore, the author of the prose *Jātakas* often quotes from the *Cariyā Piṭaka*.

The *Jātaka-nidāna* also quotes a *Cariyā Piṭaka* containing thirty-five stories, which are not always identical with those actually found in the *Cariyā Piṭaka*. Further, in this second recension of the *Cariyā Piṭaka*, all ten perfections are discussed. It seems to be nearer to the canonical Mahāvihāra Jātaka: *Cariyā Piṭaka* II 6 = *Cariyā Piṭaka* 288—306 is called *Temiyapaṇḍita*, a name used for the corresponding *Jātaka* no. 538 in the Burmese *Jātaka* tradition, most likely rooted in South India, while it is called *Mūgapakkha* in the second recension of the *Cariyā Piṭaka* (*Jātaka* I 46, 25), as in the Śri Lankan *Jātaka*.

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to turn against the Brahmins. Their teaching is called India's "unorthodox religion," inasmuch as it rejects the brahmanic sacrificial rites as well as the authority of the Vedas. Jainism requires that one practice austerities for at least twelve years. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications), pp. 374—375.

[409] Ten qualities leading to Buddhahood.

Thus, Dhammapāla comments on a *Cariyā Piṭaka* perhaps connected to South India. At the same time, he uses a different *Apadāna* recension, which may be South Indian as well. Therefore, it is possible that a South Indian *Cariyā Piṭaka*, originally called *Buddhāpadānīya Dhammapariyāya* gained canonical status also in the Mahāvihāra, because it was commented on by Paramatthadīpanī, whereas the Śri Lankan *Cariyā Piṭaka* survives only in the *Jātaka-nidāna*. Dhammapāla's *Apadāna* recension, on the other hand, on which there is no old Commentary at all, was not accepted by the Mahāvihāra.

Abhidhamma Piṭaka[410]

Overview

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is the most important and most interesting of the three *Piṭakas*, containing, as it does, the profound philosophy of the *Buddha's* teaching, in contrast to the simpler discourses of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. *Abhidhamma*, the Higher Doctrine of the *Buddha*, expounds the quintessence of His profound Teachings.

According to some scholars, *Abhidhamma* was not taught by the *Buddha* but is a later elaboration by scholastic monks. Tradition, however, attributes the nucleus of the *Abhidhamma* to the *Buddha* Himself. The *mātikā*,[411] or "matrices," of the *Abhidhamma*, such as *kusalā dhammā* (Wholesome States), *akusalā dhammā* (Unwholesome States), *avyākatā dhammā* (Neutral States), etc., which have been elaborated in six of the books of the *Abhidhamma* (*Kathāvatthu*[412] being excluded), were expounded by the *Buddha*. Venerable Sāriputta is given the credit for having expounded all of these topics in detail.

Whoever the great author or authors may have been, it has to be admitted that the *Abhidhamma* must be the product of an intellectual genius comparable only to the *Buddha*. This is evident from the intricate and subtle *Paṭṭhāna Pakaraṇa*, which describes the various causal relations in detail.

To wise truth-seekers, the *Abhidhamma* is an indispensable guide and an intellectual treat. Here is found food for thought to original thinkers and to earnest students who wish to develop wisdom and lead an ideal Buddhist life. *Abhidhamma* is not a subject of fleeting interest designed for the superficial reader.

Modern Western psychology, limited as it is, comes within the scope of *Abhidhamma*, inasmuch as it deals with mind, thoughts, thought processes, and mental properties; but the *Abhidhamma* does not admit the existence of a psyche or soul. It teaches a psychology without a psyche.

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[410] The descriptions of the works that make up the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* are taken from Russell Webb (editor), *An Analysis of the Pāḷi Canon* (Wheel publication no. 217/220) (second edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1991]), pp. 39—42.

[411] The *mātikā* (matrices) are referred to in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (*Dīgha Nikāya* no. 16).

[412] The authorship of the *Kathāvatthu* (Points of Controversy) is attributed to Venerable Moggalliputta Tissa, who presided over the Third Council at the time of King Asoka.

If one were to read the *Abhidhamma* as a modern textbook on psychology, one would be disappointed. No attempt has been made to solve all of the problems that confront a modern psychologist.

Consciousness (*citta*) is defined. Thoughts are analyzed and classified chiefly from an ethical standpoint. Fifty-two mental factors (*cetasika*) are enumerated. The composition of each type of consciousness is set forth in detail. How thoughts arise is minutely described. *Bhavanga*[413] and *javana*[414] thought-moments, which are explained only in the *Abhidhamma* and which have no parallel in modern psychology, are of special interest to those concerned with the study of the mind. Irrelevant problems, which may be of interest to students and scholars, but which have no relation to one's Deliverance, are deliberately set aside.

Matter (*rūpa*) is summarily discussed, but it has not been described for physicists. The fundamental units of matter, their material properties, the source of matter, and the relationship of mind and matter are all explained. However, *Abhidhamma* does not attempt to give a systematized knowledge of mind and matter. It investigates these two composite factors of the so-called "being" to help with the understanding of things as they truly are. A philosophy has been developed on those lines. Based on that philosophy, an ethical system has been evolved to realize the ultimate Goal — *nibbāna*.

While the *Sutta Piṭaka* contains the conventional teaching (*vohāra desanā*), the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* contains the ultimate teaching (*paramattha desanā*).

It is generally admitted by most exponents of the *Dhamma* that a knowledge of the *Abhidhamma* is essential to comprehend fully the Teachings of the *Buddha*, inasmuch as it presents the key that opens the door to reality.

Textual Analysis[415]

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is considerably younger than both the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and the *Sutta Piṭaka* and most likely originated between 200 BCE and 200 CE. It is not mentioned in the account of the First Council. Three parts of the canon are referred to for the first time in a late part of the *Sutta Vibhanga* in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* (*Vinaya* IV 344,

[413] *Bhavanga* is explained in the *Abhidhamma* Commentaries as the foundation or condition of existence. There are two types of *bhavanga*, namely, *bhavanga-sota* and *bhavanga-citta*. *Bhavanga-sota* may tentatively be rendered as the "undercurrent forming the condition of being or existence." *Bhavanga-citta*, on the other hand, may be rendered as "subconsciousness," though it differs in several respects from the usage of that term in Western psychology. For more information, cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 38—39.

[414] *Javana*, literally, "impulsion," is the phase of full cognition in the cognitive series, or perceptual process, occurring at its climax, if the respective object is large or distinct. It is at this phase that *kamma* is produced, that is, wholesome or unwholesome volitional activities of mind, speech, or body concerning the perception that was the object of the previous stages of the respective process of consciousness. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 82—83.

[415] Adapted from Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 64—65.

17). The word *abhidhamma* occurs in earlier parts of the canon, but without any technical connotation, simply meaning "things related to the teaching." The Commentary explains *Abhidhamma* as "higher *Dhamma*."

The Theravādin *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* is composed of the following seven works:

1. *Dhammasangaṇī* (Classification of *Dhammas*)
2. *Vibhanga* (Divisions)
3. *Dhātukathā* (Discourse on Elements)
4. *Puggalapaññatti* (The Book on Individuals)
5. *Kathāvatthu* (Points of Controversy)
6. *Yamaka* (The Book of Pairs)
7. *Paṭṭhāna* (The Book of Causal Relations)

This division is described for the first time in the introduction to the *Milinda-pañha*[416] (*Milindapañha* 12, 21—31) and discussed at length in the *Dhammasangaṇī* Commentary (*Atthasālinī* 3, 21—10, 30). Here, an eighth text, which did not survive, is mentioned. For the Commentary says that the Vitaṇḍavādins rejected the *Kathāvatthu* as not spoken by the *Buddha* and replaced it by the *Mahādhammahadaya*, which could correspond in some way or other to the *Dhammahadayavibhanga*.

The Teaching of the *Buddha* as preserved in the *Sutta Piṭaka* is not arranged systematically, in spite of some early attempts, such as the last two *suttas* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, particularly *sutta* no. 34, Dasuttara Sutta, containing lists on different concepts of the *Dhamma*. Therefore, the Commentary calls this text a *mātikā* (*Sumangalavilāsinī* 1054, 29), with much justification. The term *mātikā* refers to lists or summaries typical for *Abhidhamma* texts, which usually begin with a *mātikā* naming items to be explained in the following text. The idea of creating *mātikās* seems to have been borrowed from the *Vinaya*, because *mātikās* are found already in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, and because this word refers to the *Pātimokkhasutta* in the frequent formula *dhammadhara, vinayadhara, mātikādhara*. These *mātikās* came into existence once the editors tried to go beyond the simple collection of discourses of the *Buddha* and began to arrange the main points of His Teaching in a systematic form, which, at the same time, could be easily memorized.

The lists thus created needed explanations, just as the late Vedic *sūtra* texts are hardly understandable without a commentary. Thus, the *mātikās* may be the Buddhist answer to the Vedic *sūtras*.

The language of the *Abhidhamma* texts is clearly distinct from the usage found in the first two *Piṭakas*. Brief questions are answered by lists of concepts, very often in formulas. Thus, the *Abhidhamma* texts use a method of explanation also found in the *Niddesa*, with its explicative formulas. The linguistic relation between these two types of texts, and, again, their relation to the old oral formulas in the *Sutta Piṭaka*, would make an interesting study, which might tell much about relative chronology.

[416] The *Milindapañha* has been translated by I. B. Horner: *Milinda's Questions* (Oxford: Pāḷi Text Society [two volumes, 1990]).

Dhammasaṅgaṇī

Overview

In the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the *dhammas*, or "factors of existence," are enumerated. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* opens with a *mātikā*, a "matrix" or "summary," that is, a schedule of categories, which classifies the totality of phenomena into a scheme of twenty-two triads (*tika*) — sets of three terms — and a hundred dyads (*duka*) — sets of two terms. The *mātikā* also includes a *suttanta* matrix, a schedule of forty-two dyads taken from the *suttas*. The *mātikā* serves as a framework for the entire *Abhidhamma*, introducing the diverse perspectives from which all phenomena are to be classified. The main body of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* consists of four parts:

1. "States of Consciousness," which analyzes all states of consciousness into their constituent factors, each of which is elaborately defined;
2. "Matter," which enumerates and classifies the various types of material phenomena;
3. "The Summary," offering concise explanations of all the terms in the *Abhidhamma* and *suttanta* matrixes;
4. "The Synopsis," offering more condensed explanations of the *Abhidhamma* matrix but not the *suttanta* matrix.

Textual Analysis

Besides the name *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* "Classification of *Dhammas*," old texts also use the alternative title *Dhammasangaha* "Compendium of *Dhammas*." Further, the title *Abhidhammasaṅgaṇī* is found in old manuscripts, but this is considered to be a mistake.

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* begins with a *mātikā* and without an introduction, a fact that seems to have concerned the Theravādins in olden times, for the Commentary reports that there were attempts to create a *nidāna* for the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*. This was either taken from an existing *sutta* or created specifically for this very text: "at one time, the *Buddha* stayed in the Tāvattiṁsa Heaven … and taught the *Abhidhamma*" (*Atthasālinī* 30, 16—31, 16).

This introduction refers to the tradition that the *Buddha* first taught the *Abhidhamma* to His deceased mother, along with other deities, in the Tāvattiṁsa Heaven during the fourth week after His Enlightenment (*Atthasālinī* 13, 12). The motive behind this idea is easy to see. If the late *Abhidhamma* was considered as *Buddhavacana*, it was imperative to find some place where it could have been spoken, as is usual in the *suttas* and *Vinaya* texts alike. Of course, there was and could not possibly be any tradition on place names, and, consequently, the displacement into the Tāvattiṁsa Heaven was a wise move, with no local Buddhist community being able to object, because it was not mentioned in the *nidāna*.

The tradition of how it was transmitted on earth begins with Venerable Sāriputta and includes Venerable Mahinda, who brought the *Abhidhamma* to Śri Lanka, according

to the Commentary (*Atthasālinī* 32, 13—20). The series of names given there seems to be inspired by the *Parivāra* (*Vinaya* V 3, 1).

The subdivisions of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* are discussed in the Commentary, where the titles are slightly different from those used in the text itself. Moreover, it is stated that the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* can be expanded endlessly (*Atthasālinī* 7, 6). Thus, the text is seen as an open system, somewhat similar to the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* is a compilation from different sources and is considered to be the youngest text among those found in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. Consequently, the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* reflects the state of development of Theravādin philosophy at the time when the third *Piṭaka* was closed.

Vibhanga

Overview

The *Vibhanga* contains eighteen chapters, dealing, in turn, with the following: sense bases, elements, truths, faculties, Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), foundations of mindfulness, supreme efforts, means to accomplishment, factors of enlightenment, the Noble Eightfold Path, *jhānas*, illimitables (*brahmavihāra*), training rules, analytical knowledge, kinds of knowledge, defilements, and "the heart of the doctrine," a concise overview of the Buddhist universe.

Textual Analysis

The term *vibhanga* "explanation, commentary" is already mentioned in older parts of the canon. In contrast to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, the *Vibhanga* does not begin with a *mātikā*, which, however, can be reconstructed by comparing parallel texts with other schools.

As noted above, the *Vibhanga* contains eighteen chapters. A first *mātikā* is treated in Chapters 1—6, a second one in Chapters 7—15. These *mātikās* consist of very old lists, such as the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*), the twelve sense bases (*āyatana*), etc., which are frequently discussed in the *Sutta Piṭaka*. Thus, the *Vibhanga* systematizes old material, and this text is considered to be the oldest in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*.

The last three chapters of the *Vibhanga* were originally independent small books on *Abhidhamma* separate from the beginning of the text. Chapter 16, *Ñāṇavibhaṅga*, is arranged according to the same numerical principle as the *Anguttara Nikāya*.

The last chapter of the *Vibhanga* is the *Dhammahadayavibhaṅga*, with a *mātikā* of its own. Perhaps this treatise is identical with or similar to the *Mahādhammahadaya* accepted by the Vitaṇḍavādins as canonical in place of the *Kathāvatthu*.

Dhātukathā

Overview

The *Dhātukathā* discusses all phenomena with reference to the three schemata of aggregates, sense bases, and elements. It attempts to determine whether, and to what extent, they are included or not included in them and whether they are associated with them or disassociated with them.

Textual Analysis

The *Dhātukathā* begins with a *mātikā* split into two parts. The fourteen items mentioned in the first part provide, at the same time, the division of the text, and those contained in the second part are combined with them. The central theme of the *Dhātukathā* is the relation of different concepts to the *dhātus* "elements."

It is stated in the *Sāratthappakāsinī*[417] (*Sāratthappakāsinī* II 201, 25) that the *Dhātukathā* and some other parts of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* were not recited during the first three councils.

Puggalapaññatti

Overview

The body of the *Puggalapaññatti* provides formal definitions of different types of individuals. It has ten chapters: the first deals with single types of individuals, the second with pairs, the third with groups of three, etc. The detailed typology elaborated in the *Puggalapaññatti* is heavily dependent upon the *Sutta Piṭaka*, especially the *Anguttara Nikāya*.

Textual Analysis

The *mātikā* of the *Puggalapaññatti* comprises six *paññattis* "concepts," of which the first five have been taken over from the common *Abhidhamma mātikā*, and only the last one is *puggala* "individual, person," which is actually explained in the text. The different types of persons are arranged in groups from one to ten, and, as in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the numbers of the last three groups are arrived at only by adding two sets of persons.

Except for the *mātikā*, this text is particularly near to *Dīgha Nikāya*, *sutta* no. 34, Dasuttara Sutta, and to the *Anguttara Nikāya*, and, indeed, texts from the *Anguttara Nikāya* have been included in the *Puggalapaññatti*, though not mechanically, for the

[417] The *Sāratthappakāsinī* is the Commentary on the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

address *bhikkhave* "monks" has been regularly removed from the text. Thus, the "remembered orally" prevalent in the *suttas* and even in the *Vinaya* texts has been given up in favor of the style appropriate for a treatise on philosophy.

The editor of the *Puggalapaññatti* limited his efforts to a collection of material from other parts of the canon, without developing any ideas of his own on the concept of a person. Therefore, it is impossible to relate the *Puggalapaññatti* to the history of philosophical ideas and to other *Abhidhamma* texts in order to arrive at a relative date. Moreover, there is no parallel text in any other Buddhist school — the *Prajñaptiśāstra* of the Sarvāstivādins is completely different. Consequently, the *Puggalapaññatti* seems to be a specific Theravādin creation not belonging to the common stock of *Abhidhamma* texts.

Kathāvatthu

Overview

The *Kathāvatthu* contains a discussion of the points of controversy between the early Buddhist Schools and a defense of the Theravādin viewpoint. The *Kathāvatthu* is attributed to Venerable Moggalliputta Tissa, who presided over the Third Council, which was convened in Patna by the Emperor Asoka in the middle of the third century BCE.

Textual Analysis

The *Kathāvatthu*, "Points of Controversy" or "Text Dealing with Disputes," is quite different from the other six treatises of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. For it does not list *dhammas*, but aims at the refutation of heretical views.

According to tradition, the *Kathāvatthu* was composed by Venerable Moggalliputta Tissa 218 years after the *parinibbāna* of the *Buddha*. Consequently, this is the only canonical *Abhidhamma* text exactly dated to the year in the Theravādin tradition itself.

As previously mentioned, the *Kathāvatthu* was not universally accepted as a canonical text, because it clearly is not *buddhavacana*. However, it is saved as such by the view that the *Buddha* has spoken the *mātikā* in the Tāvattiṁsa Heaven, which Moggalliputta Tissa elaborated on at the Third Council after King Asoka had purged the *Sangha*. When the canon was recited on this occasion, the *Kathāvatthu* was included. Obviously, the Theravādin tradition was always aware of the relatively late date of the *Kathāvatthu*.

The *Kathāvatthu* is divided into four *Paṇṇāsaka* "groups of fifty (points to be discussed)," which, in turn, are subdivided into twenty *vaggas*, each with a varying number of disputed items. At the end, three further *vaggas* are added. This somewhat irregular structure seems to indicate that the text has been growing over a certain period of time, and, whenever new controversies arose, they were included.

In contrast to other *Abhidhamma* texts, the *Kathāvatthu* does not begin with a *mātikā*. Inasmuch as it was felt that an *Abhidhamma* text simply needs a *mātikā*, it has been inserted into an existing text (*Kathāvatthu* 11, 6—13, 24), which is centered around problems connected to *puggala* "person." This is by far the longest discussion in the *Kathāvatthu*, and probably an old part, for there is also a chapter on *pudgala*[418] in the parallel text used by the Sarvāstavādins, the *Vijñānakāya*.

It has been observed that there are linguistically divergent forms,[419] so-called "Māgadhisms," in the *Puggala* chapter of the *Kathāvatthu*. These Māgadhisms are limited to certain formulas used in the discussion. This, again, shows that the beginning of the *Kathāvatthu* has been built from old material. It does not mean, however, that the *Kathāvatthu* was originally formulated in eastern India or in the early eastern language of Buddhism, because fragments from an early oral method of discussion may survive here. This is all the more interesting, since the text of the *Kathāvatthu* is not always really understandable without further explanation. Obviously, a possibly originally oral commentary had to accompany the text. Thus, this type of text tradition is, in a way, surprisingly near to that of the *Jātakas*.

A little more than two hundred points are discussed in the *Kathāvatthu*, although it seems that the tradition assumes a larger number. According to the Commentaries, Moggalliputta Tissa used five hundred orthodox, and the same number of heretical, *suttas* to demonstrate his purpose.

There are, indeed, quotations from the *Sutta Piṭaka*, which are always accepted as authoritative even by the opponents of the Theravādin point of view. It is interesting that sometimes the wording seems to be slightly different from the received text. Among these quotations is a verse from the *Nidhikaṇḍa*, the only reference to a text from the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, which, however, seems originally to have existed as a separate text. Thus, this quotation has no bearing on the existence of this *Nikāya*.

It is clear that the *Kathāvatthu* is a source of the highest possible value for the history of Buddhist philosophy, and this fact has gotten due attention in research.

The discussions in the *Kathāvatthu* are developed in a very peculiar, prelogical way of arguing, perhaps originally developed in eastern India. At the same time, some features of the much later Indian logic seem to be anticipated here in an early form. Therefore, the *Kathāvatthu* deserves much more attention than has been devoted to it so far in the history of Indian logic, in spite of some valuable studies.

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[418] This is the Sanskrit equivalent of Pāḷi *puggala* "individual, person."

[419] That is, forms in a Middle Indo-Aryan language other than Pāḷi — in this case, from the Middle Indo-Aryan language of the Kingdom of Māgadha. In its main features, Pāḷi is clearly a (north-)western Middle Indo-Aryan language, and, as such, it could not have been the language actually spoken by the *Buddha*, which was probably Māgadhī, an eastern Middle Indo-Aryan language. In the earliest times, the Buddhist teachings were preached in the vernaculars of the major centers such as Ujjayinī, Mathurā, Vaiśālī, and Kauśambī (using their Sanskrit designations). Traces of elements from Middle Indo-Aryan languages other than Pāḷi can be found here and there in the texts of the Theravādin Canon. Cf. T. Y. Elizarenkova and V. N. Toporov, *The Pāḷi Language* (Moscow: "Nauka" Publishing House [1976]), pp. 14—22, and Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāḷi Literature* (Berlin and New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter [2000]), pp. 4—5.

A strong disadvantage of the presentation of the controversies in the *Kathāvatthu* is the lack of indication of the respective school to which the heretical views under discussion may belong. These are mentioned much later only in the Commentary.[420] In this respect, the *Kathāvatthu* differs from the *Vijñānakāya*, where the interlocutors are named.

It is not entirely obvious why the *Kathāvatthu* has been included in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. The form of the text, which contains discussions, is nearer to the *suttas* than to the *Abhidhamma*. On the other hand, the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, which is much more an *Abhidhamma* text than is the *Kathāvatthu*, was included only in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* and not in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, where it really belongs. The reason may be chronology. At the time when the *Kathāvatthu* was formed under King Asoka, the four great *Nikāyas* may have already been closed collections, while the *Abhidhamma* was still open. That had changed when the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* came into existence. If the second century CE is approximately correct, then, evidently, the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* was closed as well, and only the *Khuddaka Nikāya* remained open for new texts such as the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and others.

Yamaka

Overview

The *Yamaka* has the purpose of resolving ambiguities and defining the precise usage of technical terms. It is called the "Book of Pairs" because it employs pairs of questions that approach the subject under investigation from opposing points of view. The *Yamaka* has ten chapters: (1) roots; (2) aggregates; (3) sense bases; (4) elements; (5) truths; (6) formations; (7) latent dispositions; (8) consciousness; (9) phenomena; and (10) faculties.

Textual Analysis

The *Yamaka* is a large text of perhaps more than 2,500 pages, if printed in full. All editions are strongly abbreviated. Following the tradition, the *Yamaka* contains the enormous number of two thousand *bhāṇavāras*.[421]

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[420] The Commentary for the *Kathāvatthu* is called the *Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā*. This Commentary also covers the *Dhātukathā*, the *Puggalapaññatti*, the *Yamaka*, and the *Paṭṭhāna*. Among the commentaries united in the *Pañcappakaraṇaṭṭhakathā*, the one for the *Kathāvatthu*, deserves special attention for the history of Buddhism. It begins with a survey of the different Buddhist schools, which contains a quotation from the *Dīpavaṁsa*. The heretical views discussed and refuted in the *Kathāvatthu* are attributed to these different schools.

[421] Sections of the scriptures, divided into such for purposes for recitation.

It seems that the original idea behind the title was that pairs are constituted by the arising of one thing, which conditions the arising of a second thing. The tradition derives the title from different sets of pairs.

According to the Commentary, there are three sets of pairs: (1) *Atthayamaka*, (2) *Dhammayamaka*, and (3) *Pucchāyamaka*, besides an additional second division into ten pairs, also named in the Commentary. These items, which actually follow the *Vibhanga-mātikā*, are recognized as a *mātikā* in the much later *Mohavicchedanī*.

The subdivision of the *Yamaka* is still more complicated, and it is important for the history of the text that the seventh of the ten *yamakas* does not occur in the *Vibhanga-mātikā*, which has already been observed by the Commentary. This chapter may be a later addition.

Paṭṭhāna

Overview

Causation and the mutual relationship of phenomena are examined in the *Paṭṭhāna*. The *Paṭṭhāna* contains an elaboration of a scheme of twenty-four conditional relations (*paccaya*) for plotting the causal connections between different types of phenomena. The body of this work applies these conditional relations to all the phenomena included in the *Abhidhamma* matrix. The book has four main sections: (1) origination according to the positive method; (2) origination according to the negative method; (3) origination according to the positive-negative method; and (4) origination according to the negative-positive method. Each of these, in turn, has six subdivisions: origination (1) of triads ("groups of three"), (2) of dyads ("groups of two"), (3) of dyads and triads combined, (4) of triads and dyads combined, (5) of triads and triads combined, and (6) of dyads and dyads combined.

Textual Analysis

Because of its great size[422] as well as its philosophical importance, the *Paṭṭhāna* is also known as *Mahāpakaraṇa*, "The Great Treatise." This huge text is by far the longest single text found in the *Tipiṭaka*. The number of *bhāṇavāras* is incalculable, inasmuch as it is not given.

The title is explained as "basis (for all other *Abhidhamma* texts)," for the twenty-four triads (*tika*) and the one hundred dyads (*duka*) are considered to be the *mātikā* for all *Abhidhamma* texts. This, of course, does not agree with the historical development.

Traditionally, it is assumed that the triads and dyads just mentioned were spoken by the *Buddha* Himself, while another forty-two dyads have been added by Venerable

[422] In the Burmese script Sixth Council edition of the Pāḷi Canon, the *Paṭṭhāna* spans five volumes totaling 2,500 pages.

Sāriputta. It has been recognized by the tradition that the basis of the *Paṭṭhāna* are *Dīgha Nikāya* no. 33, Sangīti Sutta, and no. 34, Dasuttara Sutta, together with the *Anguttara Nikāya*. The text is thought to facilitate the use of the *suttas* for *Abhidhamma* specialists, and this is the purpose usually ascribed to the *Paṭṭhāna* by tradition.

The *Paṭṭhāna* tries to provide a comprehensive explanation of causality and enumerates what can originate out of what. It is easy to see that the number of possibilities that is opened up here is almost limitless.

The structure of the *Paṭṭhāna* is difficult to follow and has not been sufficiently investigated so far.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, only the canonical texts of the Pāḷi Canon have been discussed. In addition to these texts, there is a huge amount of commentarial and subcommentarial literature as well as many non-canonical works, including anthologies, cosmological texts, poetry, stories, chronicles, and letters and inscriptions. Among these are famous works such as the *Dīpavaṁsa* ("Chronicle of the Island" [Śri Lanka]), the *Mahāvaṁsa* ("Great Chronicle" [also of Śri Lanka]), the *Milindapañha* ("Milinda's Questions"), the *Visuddhimagga* ("Path of Purification"), the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* ("A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma"), etc. ■

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18

The Three Councils[423]

"Those who are wise should admonish others; they should give advice to others; and they should prevent others from doing what is wrong. Ones such as these are held dear by the good; they are disliked only by the bad."[424]

The First Council

The *Buddha* passed away in His eightieth year on the full moon day of Vesak. His death was an irreparable loss. All His followers, with the exception of *Anāgāmīs* and *Arahants*, were plunged into deep grief and were weeping and lamenting. However, a certain *Bhikkhu* named Subhadda, who had entered the Order in his old age, was the only one who rejoiced over the death of the *Buddha*.

"Do not grieve, brothers," he said, "do not weep. We are now delivered of that Great Ascetic. He constantly admonished us, saying: 'This is proper, this is not proper.' Now we are free to do as we like."

These unexpected words that fell from the lips of a disciple, when hardly a week had passed since the death of the Blessed One, induced Venerable Kassapa, the third Chief Disciple of the *Buddha*, to hold a council of leading *Arahants* in order to protect and strengthen the *sāsana*. The other *Theras* were consulted, and they all welcomed the suggestion.

King Ajātasatu was informed of the intention of the *Sangha*, and he made all the necessary arrangements for the *Sangha* to convene at the entrance to the Sattapanni Cave in Rājagaha.

500 seats were prepared in the spacious hall, but only 499 distinguished *Arahants* were invited to attend the convocation. The remaining seat was intended for Venerable Ānanda, who was then a *Sotāpanna*. But in due course, as anticipated, he attained Arahantship and appeared on the scene to occupy the seat that had been reserved for him.

Venerable Kassapa was the presiding *Thera*. Venerable Upāli was chosen to recite the *Vinaya*, and Venerable Ānanda the *Dhamma*.

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[423] This chapter is adapted from Nārada Thera, *A Manual of Buddhism* (Kuala Lumpur: The Buddhist Missionary Society [fifth edition, 1971]), Chapter XVII: The Three Councils, pp. 113—118.

[424] *Dhammapada*, VI, The Wise, verse 77.

The First Council was held three months after the *parinibbāna* of the *Buddha*, in the eighth year of King Ajātasattu's reign. It lasted seven months.

The *Vinaya*, being the cornerstone of the *sāsana*, was recited first. It is composed of five books. Next, the *Dhamma* was recited. It is composed of five collections, or *Nikāyas*. It should be noted that the opening words of every *sutta*, "*Evaṁ me sutaṁ*," "Thus have I heard," were uttered by Venerable Ānanda Thera.

According to tradition, the *Abhidhamma* was recited by all of the *Arahants* who were present at the convocation. In point of fact, however, the *Abhidhamma* was most likely compiled between 200 BCE and 200 CE. Originally, the *Abhidhamma* consisted of six books. The *Kathāvatthu*, which was compiled by Venerable Moggalliputta Tissa, was added at the Third Council.

All of these works are collectively termed the *Tipiṭaka*, the "Three Baskets." The first collection, the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the "Basket of Discipline," mainly deals with rules and regulations that the *Buddha* promulgated for the discipline of the Order (*Sangha*) of Monks (*Bhikkhus*) and Nuns (*Bhikkhunīs*). The second collection, the *Sutta Piṭaka*, the "Basket of Discourses," consists chiefly of discourses delivered by the *Buddha* on various occasions. Some discourses delivered by Venerables Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Ānanda, etc. are also included in this collection. The third collection, the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, the "Basket of Higher Doctrine," contains the profound philosophy of the *Buddha's* Teaching.

The *Tipiṭika* was committed to writing at Aluvihāra in Śri Lanka about 83 BCE in the reign of King Vaṭṭa Gāmaṇi Abhaya.

The Second Council

The Second Council was held at Vesālī in the tenth year of King Kālāsoka's reign, 100 years after the *parinibbāna* of the *Buddha*. At that time, many misguided *Bhikkhus* of the Vajji clan claimed that the following ten points were not unlawful:[425]

1. *Singilonakappa*: it is permissible to use salt in horns, etc. in order to season unsalted foods.
2. *Dvangulakappa*: it is permissible to eat food as long as the sun's shadow has not passed the meridian by more than two finger's breadth.
3. *Gāmantarakappa*: it is permissible for a *Bhikkhu* who has already finished his meal to eat another meal without going through the due *Vinaya* rite if he intends to enter a village.
4. *Āvasakappa*: it is permissible to perform the *Uposatha* ceremony in separate buildings in the case of a large *sīma* (jurisdiction).
5. *Anumatikappa*: it is permissible to perform any *Vinaya* ceremony first and then take the consent of the absent *Bhikkhus*.

[425] All of these points pertain to the disciplinary rules. Some of them may not be intelligible to lay readers.

6. *Āccinakappa*: it is permissible to conform to the practice of teachers and preceptors.
7. *Amathitakappa*: it is permissible for a *Bhikkhu* who has finished his meal to drink that milk which has changed its original state but has not yet become curd, without getting the due *Vinaya* rite done.
8. *Jalogikappa*: it is permissible to drink unfermented palm-wine.
9. *Adasaka-nisidanakappa*: it is permissible to use mats without fringes.
10. *Jātarupadikappa*: it is permissible to accept gold and silver.

Venerable Yasa, who came to hear of these heretical teachings, resolved, even at the cost of his life, to nip them in the bud. He succeeded. Venerable Revata, who was questioned about them, proclaimed that they were all unlawful.

Ultimately, in the presence of eight distinguished *Arahants* who had assembled at Vālukārama in Vesālī, Venerable Sabbakāmi, being 120 years from his higher ordination (*upasampadā*), when questioned by Venerable Revata, judged that they were all unlawful according to the *Vinaya*.

After this, Venerable Revata chose 700 distinguished *Arahants* to attend a council in order to protect the *Dhamma* from degeneration and corruption. This Second Council lasted eight months. King Kālāsoka acted as the royal patron. Venerable Sabbakāmi was the presiding *Thera*.

Among the assembled *Arahants*, Venerables Sabbakāmi, Salha, Revata, Yasa, Sambhūta, Khujjasobhita, and Sānavāsika, all pupils of Venerable Ānanda, and Venerables Vasabhagāmika and Sumana, pupils of Venerable Anuruddha, had the good fortune to have lived in the *Buddha's* own time.

The Third Council

The conversion of King Asoka (Dharmāśoka) was a very great asset to Buddhism. With his royal patronage, Buddhism flourished, and the *sāsana* gradually grew in both importance and numbers. Tempted by worldly gain, many undesirables of alien sects joined the Order and polluted the *sāsana* by their corrupt lifestyles and heretical views.

Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa, who was then the senior *Arahant*, being aware of the corruption of the Order, refrained from performing the *Uposatha* Ceremony with the *Sangha* for seven years, and was living in retirement on the banks of the Ahoganga River.

It was at this time that King Asoka had questions about a thoughtless act done by an irresponsible minister. He was told that Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa would be able to answer his questions. The King sent word to the *Arahant*, but he would not come. Failing twice, the third time, the King sent a messenger inviting Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa to protect the *sāsana*. This time, the Venerable *Thera* accepted the invitation and arrived at the capital, Pāṭaliputta (modern Patna). The King received him with due honor and housed him in Asokārama, built by the King himself. For seven days, the King stayed with him and studied the *Dhamma*, sitting at his feet.

The *Bhikkhus* were then tested with regard to their views, and those who held heretical views were expelled from the Order. The pure *Bhikkhus* who remained in the Order then performed the *Uposatha* Ceremony for the first time in seven years.

Thereupon, Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa availed himself of the opportunity to convene the Third Council in order to protect the *Dhamma* and *sāsana* from degeneration and corruption. One thousand *Arahants* participated in the council, which was held at Asokārama in Pāṭaliputta in the eighteenth year of King Asoka's reign, 236 years after the *parinibbāna* of the *Buddha*. Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa was the presiding *Thera*, and it was he who was responsible for the composition of the *Kathāvatthu-Pakarama*, which was then incorporated into the *Abhidhamma* as the seventh book. ■

19

The Buddhist Schools[426]

"Foolish people who scoff at the teachings of the wise, the noble, and the good, and who follow false doctrines instead, bring about their own destruction, like the bamboo tree, which dies after bearing fruit."[427]

Introduction

The Buddhist community did not remain united for long after the passing of the *Buddha* and the holding of the first convocation of *Arahants* at Rājagaha and soon fell apart into a number of sects. Indian Buddhist tradition generally speaks of eighteen such sects, but that is merely a traditional number, and, in fact, more than thirty are known to have existed, at least in name. The *Buddha* did not appoint a successor, and Buddhism has never had a central authority like the Pope or the Khalif. As different Buddhist communities became established in different parts of India, local traditions developed, though, in spite of all geographical and doctrinal divisions, the different centers generally remained in frequent communication with each other. Not only did individual monks constantly travel from one center to another, but the institution of regular pilgrimages of masses of monks and lay people to the holy places of Magadha caused a continuous intermingling of diverse elements. Consequently, the problems that the sects discussed remained roughly the same for all and so were the assumptions on which the solutions were based. Through regular contact, all Buddhists thus remained mutually informed about developments in the various centers throughout India. The different sects tended to have their own organization and scriptures. In many monasteries, members of different sects nevertheless lived together in perfect harmony, it being recognized that the goal may be reached by different roads. Thus, the sects showed great tolerance for each other, although occasional sharp disagreements were, of course, not unknown. Even though they all shared one common *Dharma*,[428] it is important to remember that the verbal

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[426] This chapter is adapted from Edward Conze, *A Short History of Buddhism* (London: George Allen & Unwin [1980]), pp. 31—38. The following works have also been consulted: Andrew Skilton, *A Concise History of Buddhism* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble [2000]); *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]); and John Snelling, *The Buddhist Handbook* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble [1998]).

[427] *Dhammapada*, XII, The Self, verse 164.

[428] Pāḷi *Dhamma* "teaching(s), doctrine."

formulation of this *Dharma* was complicated — it did not exist in a brief, handy, and unambiguous form. It was transmitted orally to prevent it from reaching those unfit to receive it, but there was so much that no one person could keep it all in his mind. Consequently, different parts of the scriptures were handed to specialists who knew by heart, say, the *Vinaya* or the *suttas*, or a part of the *suttas*, or the *Abhidhamma*, and so on. Those who recited each part of the scriptures formed separate groups with privileges of their own, and their very existence would add to the divisions within the Order.

Nor must we forget the fact that this Order, no matter how much it might resent the fact, was not a self-contained entity, but had to co-exist with lay people on whom it was economically dependent. There was thus a constant tension between those who regarded the *Dharma* as a means to produce a small elite of *Arahants* living in monastic seclusion in strict observation of the *Vinaya* rules and those who wished to increase the chances of liberation (*mokṣa*[429]) for ordinary people, while combating the authority of the *Arahants* and working for the relaxation of the monastic rules and regulations.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that philosophy was one of the most potent causes of sectarian division. It is not difficult to understand why philosophy would have played a decisive role in the development of Buddhism. Liberation on its highest levels was made dependent upon the meditational awareness of the actual facts governing our mental processes. In the course of practicing these meditations, the monks encountered problems that fall within the domain of philosophy, such as the nature and classification of knowledge, the problems of causality, of space and time, of the criteria of reality, of the existence or non-existence of a "self" and so on. Now, philosophy differs from all other branches of knowledge in that it allows for more than one solution to each problem. It is in the nature of things that the differences of opinion should have multiplied the more the Buddhists delved into the philosophical implications of their doctrines.

It would be nearly impossible to enumerate here the literally hundreds of points of dispute that arose among the early Buddhists, or even to give an account of all the sects. It will be sufficient to say a few words about the four or five major sects, and leave the various sub-sects out of the discussion.

The Mahāsaṅghikas

The first split, between the Mahāsaṅghikas and the Sthaviravādins, came about due to the question of the status of *Arahants*. A teacher named Mahādeva arose who claimed that *Arahants* fell short of the god-like character that some sections of the community attributed to them. They could, among other things, have seminal emissions in their sleep, and that fact, so Mahādeva argued, indicated that they were still subject to the influence of demonic deities who appeared to them in their dreams. Mahādeva also argued that *Arahants* are still subject to doubts, that they are ignorant of many things, and that they owe their liberation to the guidance of others. Mahādeva's views led to a

[429] Pāḷi *vimokkha* "release, liberation."

dispute within the community in which the majority took his side. As a result, they called themselves the Mahāsaṅghikas "Larger [Greater] Community." Mahādeva's opponents called themselves the *Sthaviras*,[430] "the Elders," claiming greater seniority and orthodoxy. The Mahāsaṅghikas continued to exist in India until the end of Buddhism in that country, and important doctrinal developments took place in their midst. All of these developments were ultimately determined by their decision to take the side of ordinary people against the rigid orthodoxy of the Sthaviravādins, thus becoming the channel through which popular aspirations entered Buddhism.

Their most important theories concern Buddhology and philosophical theory. As for the *Buddha*, they regarded everything personal, earthly, temporal, and historical as outside the real *Buddha*, Whom they regarded as transcendental, altogether supra-mundane, without any imperfections or impurities of any kind, omniscient, all-powerful, infinite and eternal, forever withdrawn in deep meditation, never distracted or asleep. In this way, the *Buddha* was transformed into an ideal object of religious faith. As for this historical *Buddha*, He was regarded as a magical creation of the transcendental *Buddha*, a fictitious being sent to appear in the world to teach its inhabitants. While on the one side intent on glorifying the otherworldliness of the *Buddha*, the Mahāsaṅghikas tried, at the same time, to increase the range of His usefulness to ordinary people. For them, the *Buddha* has not disappeared into *nirvāṇa*,[431] but, with a compassion as unlimited as the length of His life, He will, until the end of time, conjure up various messengers who will help sentient beings in diverse ways. His influence is not confined to those few[432] who can understand His abstruse doctrines. As a *Bodhisattva*,[433] that is, during the very long period that precedes His Buddhahood, He is even reborn in "states of woe," becomes, of His own free will, an animal, a hungry ghost (*preta*[434]), or a dweller in the hell realms, and, in many ways, furthers the well-being of those beings who live in conditions in which wisdom teachings[435] fall on deaf ears. Nor are *Buddhas* found on this earth alone, but they fill the entire universe and exist here and there everywhere, in all the world systems.

Two of the philosophical theories of the Mahāsaṅghika School are of particular importance:

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[430] Pāḷi *thera* "elder, senior."
[431] Pāḷi *nibbāna*.
[432] The reference here is to *Arahants*.
[433] Pāḷi *Bodhisatta*.
[434] Pāḷi *peta* "hungry ghost."
[435] Sanskrit *prajñāpāramitā* "perfection of wisdom." This term is applied to approximately forty Mahāyāna *sūtras*, the most famous of which are the *Diamond Sūtra* (*Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) and the *Heart Sūtra* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitā-hridaya-sūtra*). They were all gathered together under this name because they all deal with the realization of wisdom (*prajñā*). They represent a part of the *Vaipulya-sūtras*, literally, "extensive *sūtras*," and were composed around the beginning of the Common Era. Their most famous interpreter was Nāgārjuna. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), p. 274.

1. The Mahāsaṅghikas taught that thought, in its own nature, its own being, and its own substance, is perfectly pure and translucent. The impurities are accidental to it, never enter into or affect its original purity, and remain adventitious to it.
2. They also were, in the course of time, led to an increasing skepticism about the value of verbalized and conceptualized knowledge. Some Mahāsaṅghikas taught that all worldly things are unreal, because they are a result of mistaken views. Only that which transcends worldly things and can be called "emptiness," being the absence of all of them, is real. Others taught that everything, both worldly and supramundane, both absolute and relative, both *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, is fictitious and unreal, and that all we have is a number of verbal expressions to which nothing real corresponds. In this way, the Mahāsaṅghikas early implanted the seeds that came to fruition in Mahāyāna Buddhism at a later date.

The Pudgalavādins

The second split, between the Pudgalavādins and the Sthaviravādins, concerned the question of *pudgala*,[436] or "person." At the beginning of their history, the Pudgalavādins were called "Vatsīputrīyas" after the name of their founder, whereas, later on, they were better known as "Sammitīyas." Although barely orthodox, the Pudgalavādins were, at times, strong in numbers. It was a fundamental doctrine of Buddhist philosophy that personhood is a false concept and that no idea of "self," in whatever form it might appear, ought to have a place in the conception of reality as it actually is. The Pudgalavādins challenged this position and claimed that, in addition to the impersonal *dharmas*,[437] there is still a Person to be reckoned with. They could adduce much scriptural authority in favor of their views. They were, for instance, fond of quoting the remark: "One person, when He is born in the world, is born for the welfare of the many. Who is that one person? He is the *Tathāgata*." Their opponents had to accept these and many other passages, but they maintained that these passages do not mean that a real "self" exists, since, in them, the *Buddha* is merely using conventional language (*vohāra-vacana*) in order to make Himself understood to the ignorant world.[438]

The Pudgalavādins, on the other hand, taught that the Person is a reality in the ultimate sense, which provides a common factor or link for the successive processes occurring in a self-identical individual, over many lives, up to Buddhahood. At the same time, they took great care to define the relation of the Person to the *skandhas*[439] in such a way as not to contradict the essential principles of the *Buddha's* Teaching and so as to exclude the "erroneous belief in self." They taught that "the Person is neither identical

[436] Pāḷi *puggala* "individual, person."
[437] Pāḷi *dhamma*. Here, it means "factors of existence."
[438] Cf. Nyanatiloka Mahāthera, *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures* (= "The Wheel" publication no. 394/396), III. Paṭicca-Samuppāda: Dependent Origination" (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1994]), p. 53.
[439] Pāḷi *khandha* "aggregates [of clinging]."

with the *skandhas*, nor is he in the *skandhas*, nor outside them." According to the Pudgalavādins, a Person provides a kind of "structural unity" for the psychophysical elements. As such, a Person is "ineffable," indefinable in every respect whatsoever. A person's true, transcendental Self is, indeed, so subtle that only the *Buddhas* can see it. The Pudgalavādins represented the reaction of commonsense against the improbabilities of the *dharma*-theory in its more abstruse forms. Over the centuries, they provided a constant irritant to disputants of other sects and, in some ways, they were the forerunners of Mahāyāna philosophy. There exists a close analogy between the *pudgala* and the "Suchness," or "Emptiness," of the Mādhyamikas, while the "Store-consciousness" of the Yogācārins had many of the attributes that the Pudgalavādins assigned to the *pudgala*.

The Sarvāstavādins and the Vibhajyavādins

Thirdly, the split between the Sarvāstavādins and the Vibhajyavādins[440] was brought about by the pan-realistic doctrine of Kātyāyanīputra, who taught that not only the present, but also the past and future events are real. It appears that King Asoka sided with the Vibhajyavādins, and that, as a consequence, the Sarvāstavādins went north and settled in Kashmir,[441] which remained their center for more than a thousand years. When we consider the basic practice of Buddhist meditation, it is not surprising that the problem of the existence of past and future events should have seemed so important. Among the unsatisfactory features of this world, the pride of place belongs to impermanence, and it was the task of the Yogin to impress its full extent on his mind so as to further his distaste for worldly things. In this connection, he had to take an event, or *dharma*, and see its "rise and fall," that is, how it "comes, becomes, goes." Now, once a monk had gotten accustomed to contrasting the past with the present and future, he might well become curious to know whether only the present really exists, or also the past and the future. If only the present exists, this raises the further question of its duration, which many regarded as lasting just one single instant. In that case, no thing will endure for any length of time, and one must assume that it is annihilated and re-created from instant to instant. This raises difficulties, not only for commonsense, but, according to Kātyāyanīputra, also for the Buddhist doctrine of *karma*[442] and result. For, if a past action, which has ceased to exist immediately after taking place, should lead to a reward or punishment many years later, then, in that case, something which does not exist is operative, has an effect, at a time when it does not exist. Likewise, so Kātyāyanīputra thought, the

[440] The Vibhajyavādins split off from the Sthaviravādins around 240 BCE. Both the Mahāsaṅghikas and Theravādins developed out of this school. Its doctrines were opposed in many points to those of the Sarvāstavādins. The Vibhajyavādin School probably died out by the end of the seventh century CE. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), p. 404.

[441] The Sarvāstavādins were also the dominant school in Gandhāra, which encompassed what is nowadays the extreme northwest of India, southern Afghanistan, and parts of Pakistan. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), pp. 114—115.

[442] Pāḷi *kamma* "volitional action."

knowledge of past and future objects, as attested by memory and prediction, would be impossible, since no knowledge is possible without an actual knowledge in front of the mind. Consequently, he advanced the pan-realistic theory, which became the distinctive thesis of the Sarvāstavādins. It avoided the difficulties mentioned above, only to introduce many others in their stead, and a vast superstructure of auxiliary hypotheses was required to make it tenable. In spite of their penchant for a rather tortuous scholasticism, the Sarvāstavādins became the most significant school on the Indian subcontinent.

As a result of the emergence of an interest in philosophical questions, we have the first instance of a whole class of canonical literature being created to meet the new situation. The *Abhidharma*[443] books were clearly composed after the third division of the schools. The contents of the *Abhidharma* books of the Sarvāstavādins differ greatly from those of the seven books of the Theravādins, who are an offshoot of the Vibhajyavādins. Some sects, like the Sautrāntikas,[444] went so far as to reject the authenticity of all *Abhidharma* works. A great mental effort went, from about 200 BCE onwards, into the production of these books, which are technical handbooks of meditation, teaching what entities can be regarded as ultimate, how others are composed of them, how they condition each other, etc.

Other Points of Disagreement

Before we move on to Mahāyāna Buddhism, we may mention a few more points of disagreement among the early schools. The elusive concept of *nirvāṇa*, came in for some discussion. If it is unconditioned, does it exist, and can it have effects? Is it the only unconditioned thing, or is space also unconditioned? Is there a difference between the *nirvāṇa* of the *Buddhas* and that of other people, and what is it?

There was also much interest in determining the criteria of a definite achievement, which cannot again be lost. There was, therefore, much debate on when and whether the *Arahants* and others who had achieved one of the remaining stages of Sainthood could "fall back" and from when onwards their liberation is irreversible.

On the subject of death, always present in the minds of these ascetics, they wondered whether the hour of death is definitely fixed by *karma*, or whether a premature and untimely death is possible.

There was also disagreement on what follows death: five schools believed that death is instantly followed by rebirth in another organism,[445] whereas five other schools

[443] Pāḷi *Abhidhamma* "higher teaching."

[444] The Sautrāntikas evolved out of the Sarvāstavādins around 150 CE. They developed their doctrines as a reaction to the Vaibhāṣika School, another branch of the Sarvāstavādins. Unlike the Sautrāntikas, the Vaibhāṣikas accepted the authenticity of the Sarvāstavādin *Abhidharma*. The name Vaibhāṣika is derived from two works (*Mahāvibhāṣā* and *Vibhāṣā*) considered fundamental by this school. These works are two important commentaries on the Sarvāstavādin *Abhidharma*. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), p. 309 and pp. 395—396.

[445] This is the Theravādin position.

taught that death would be followed by an "intermediate existence"[446] of up to forty-nine days, during which, in most cases, the new incarnation slowly prepared itself. In the case of certain individuals, this interval is used for the attainment of *nirvāṇa*, which had escaped them during this life.

Mahāyāna Buddhism[447]

Around the beginning of the Common Era, a highly significant new wave of development began to assert itself. Its followers called it the Mahāyāna or "Great Vehicle," in contrast to what had gone before,[448] which they rather disparagingly called Hīnayāna "Lesser Vehicle."

The Mahāyāna represents a great creative flowering of various potentials latent in the *Buddha's* basic Teachings. South India is generally thought to have been where it originated, though Edward Conze (1904—1979) maintains that the northwest was another focal area. Conze stresses the importance of non-Indian influences from both the Mediterranean and Iranian worlds on its development, and it was in the south and northwest that those influences were generally most prevalent. Non-Buddhist Indian influences must also have played a role.

Mahāyāna Buddhism developed in two stages: first in an unsystematic form, which went on between 100 BCE and 500 CE, and then, beginning around 150 CE, in a systematized philosophical form, which led to two distinct schools, the Mādhyamika and the Yogācārin.

The main trends of Mahāyāna Buddhism may be summarized as follows:

1. The *Bodhisattva* Ideal: A new type of spiritual hero appears. In place of the *Arahant*, who seeks liberation from the painful round of cyclic existence for himself alone, and the *Pacceka-Buddha*, who gains liberation privately and does not teach the *Dharma* to others, we have in the Mahāyāna the *Bodhisattva*, an individual to whom both these highly desirable options are available but who rejects them, and instead aspires to Buddhahood solely so that he may be able to help others. This compassionate resolution is called *bodhicitta*, and, galvanized by it, he voluntarily throws himself back time and time again into the raging sea of *saṁsāra*. Other beings will, of course, be reborn time and time again too, but, in their case, the process is entirely involuntary.

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[446] The concept of a transitional or intermediate state developed in writings of around the second century CE. This concept was further elaborated in the later Vajrayāna School, finding its fullest treatment in the *bardo* teachings of Tibetan Buddhism. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), p. 28.

[447] This and the following sections on the Mādhyamika and Yogācārin Schools are adapted from John Snelling, *The Buddhist Handbook* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble [1998]), pp. 83—92.

[448] That is, all preceding schools.

2. The Six Perfections and the *Bodhisattva* Path: In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the aspiring *Bodhisattva* strives to master six perfections[449] (*pāramitā*): (1) generosity; (2) morality; (3) patience; (4) energy; (5) meditation; and (6) wisdom. The *Bodhisattva* also passes through ten stages (*bhūmi*) on his way to Buddhahood. The first six stages correspond to the six perfections. At the higher four stages, however, he might become a kind of supernatural being, a celestial *Bodhisattva*, a class of beings which also includes the celebrated *Bodhisattvas* Avalokiteśvara, who symbolizes compassion, and Mañjuśrī, who wields the sword of wisdom.
3. Compassion and Skillful Means: In Mahāyāna Buddhism, compassion (*karuṇā*) is elevated alongside wisdom (*prajñā*[450]). The two, working together, are considered to be a supreme combination.

   Buddhist compassion has connotations of being able to feel the suffering of others as if they were one's own, which, indeed, from a high point that transcends distinctions of self, they really are. Unlike lower forms of love (if, indeed, they can be called "love"), this compassion is not selective or tainted with attachment but goes out equally to all suffering beings.

   Skillful means (*upāya*) is also emphasized, for the mere wish to help other beings, each of whom is, after all, unique, would not, by itself, be very effective if it were not accompanied by insight into viable and effective methods of doing so. It would be equally useless to possess high-spirited ideals and wealth of theoretical understanding but be utterly unable to realize the desired qualities in oneself.

   All this gives the Mahāyāna a strong practical emphasis, which had, in fact, been present in Buddhism from the beginning, for the *Buddha* Himself was not merely content with telling people about the benefits of Enlightenment; He actually showed them things that they could do to get there.
4. Buddhahood as a Transcendental Principle: As heirs to the Mahāsaṅghikas, the followers of the Mahāyāna played down the *Buddha's* historical aspect as Buddha Gotama, the man born at Lumbinī, and advanced the notion of Buddhahood as a transcendental principle that has manifested over untold eons in innumerable forms and in innumerable places. Consequently, various mythical "*buddhas*" emerged in the Mahāyāna — supernatural beings who hold sway in their own heavens or "pure lands," like Amitābha,[451] the *Buddha* of Infinite Light, who resides in the western paradise of Sukhāvatī, where followers of the Pure Land sect hope to merit rebirth.
5. The *Trikāya* Doctrine: As a development of pre-existing notions, the Mahāyāna accorded the *Buddha* three bodies:

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[449] In Theravādin Buddhism, ten perfections are practiced by every *Bodhisattva* (Pāḷi *Bodhisatta*) in order to gain Supreme Enlightenment (*Sammā-Sambodhi*): (1) generosity (*dāna*); (2) morality (*sīla*); (3) renunciation (*nekkhamma*); (4) wisdom (*paññā*); (5) energy (*viriya*); (6) patience (*khanti*); (7) truthfulness (*sacca*); (8) determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*); (9) loving-kindness (*mettā*); and (10) equanimity (*upekkhā*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 147—148.

[450] Pāḷi *paññā* "wisdom."

[451] Also known as Amitāyu(s). In Japan, he is known as Amida.

- *Nirmāṇakāya*: His "transformation (or appearance) body." This is the body in which He appears in the world for the benefit of suffering beings. It is not a real, physical body but more of a phantom-like appearance assumed by:
- *Dharmakāya*: His "*Dharma* body," wherein He is one with the eternal *Dharma* that lies beyond all dualities and conceptions. There is also:
- *Saṁbhogakāya*: His "enjoyment (or bliss) body." This is the body that appears to *Bodhisattvas* in the celestial realm where they commune with the truth of the Mahāyāna.

6. Faith and Devotion: The emergence of celestial *Bodhisattvas* like Amitābha gave rise to devotional cults. Formerly, the tendency in Buddhism had been distinctly heroic: spiritual progress was possible only through intense personal effort. Now, it became possible to direct prayers for help to god-like beings who could intercede on one's behalf. This was carried to the extreme in the Pure Land School,[452] whose development, it may be mentioned, was almost certainly influenced by Nestorian Christianity,[453] which had become established in small enclaves in both India and China.[454] These god-like beings could also be worshiped through *pūjā*[455] and other devotional practices. There are similarities here with the *bhakti* cults[456] of Hinduism, which undoubtedly had a direct influence on these developments.
7. A New Role for Lay Followers: In the earlier Buddhist schools, the focus had come to be distinctly monastic. Monks (but not so much nuns) were looked up to as the spiritual front-runners — the only ones with a real chance of becoming enlightened and, hence, the only ones accorded real spiritual status. This, of course, represented

[452] The Pure Land School is also called the "Lotus School." Pure Land is a school of Chinese and Japanese Buddhism that was founded in the year 402 CE by the Chinese monk Hui-yuan (334—416 CE) and brought to Japan by Hōnen. The goal of the adherents of this school is to be reborn in the pure land of the Buddha Amitābha, that is, in the Western Paradise. This school is characterized by its stress on the importance of profound faith in the power and active compassion of the Buddha Amitābha. Amitābha made a vow to cause all beings to be reborn in his Pure Land Sukhāvatī who entrust themselves to him with faithful devotion. Thus, since its adherents count on the external help of Amitābha, the way of the Pure Land School is often regarded as the "way of faith" or the "easy way." Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), pp. 280—281.

[453] A Christian sect originating in Asia Minor and Syria out of the condemnation of Nestorius and his teachings by the Councils of Ephesus (431 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE). Nestorian Christianity stresses the independence of the divine and human natures of Christ and, in effect, suggests that they were two persons loosely united. In modern times, they are represented by the Church of the East, or Persian Church, usually referred to in the West as the Assyrian, or Nestorian, Church. Most of its members — numbering about 170,000 — live in Iraq, Syria, and Iran. (This footnote is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

[454] The Chinese community flourished between the seventh and tenth centuries CE, after which it died out.

[455] *Pūjā* "honor, worship, respect, reverence, veneration."

[456] These cults stress god-realization through love of and surrender to a *guru* and to the chosen deity. These cults distinguish between various types and levels of *bhakti*, the highest being *mahābhāva*, the intense, ecstatic love of god. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), p. 32.

a one-sidedness that needed to be addressed.[457] The emergence of devotional cults was one way in which the aspirations of lay followers for a fuller share in the religious life were met.

There were other ways as well. One new Mahāyāna scripture, for example, the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*, centered on an enlightened householder who feigned illness as a teaching device. Though not by any stretch of the imagination an average man-in-the-street, Vimalakīrti represented a kind of spiritual hero figure conspicuously absent in the earlier schools of Buddhism.

8. New Doctrines: At the core of Mahāyāna philosophy lies the notion of emptiness (*śūnyatā*[458]). This concept is very much in the spirit of *anātman*[459] as first taught by the *Buddha*. It implies emptiness of inherent existence or own-being (*svabhāva*), applied not only to living beings but to all phenomena. The view that beings create themselves and exist autonomously is false, for, in fact, they are created by causes and conditions and exist in mutual interdependence with everything else that exists. Needless to say, emptiness is not to be confused with sheer nothingness or total blankness.

   Another key Mahāyāna concept is *tathatā*, "thusness" or "suchness," which is the way things are before conceptual thought begins to reify and organize them. By extension, the *Buddha* is often called the *Tathāgata*, the "One Who Has Thus Gone." Another extension is the *Tathāgata-garbha*, or "*Buddha*-Nature," doctrine, according to which we are all, in a sense, wombs in which the seeds of Buddhahood can germinate, that is, we are all potential *Buddhas*. The idea of *Buddha*-Nature, real or potential, as many clearly saw, brought Mahāyāna Buddhism close to having a soul doctrine, which is precisely what the original teachings emphatically deny.

9. The Two Truths: The structure of our everyday languages does not allow us to describe things as they really are. It carves the world up into separate bits and pieces and so distorts reality, which is not, in itself, fragmented in that way. Out this dilemma arose the notion of two levels of truth:

   - Conventional Truth[460] (*saṁvṛti-satya*[461]): the everyday, commonsense truth of the phenomenal world, basically distorted but open to skillful manipulation in order to point to ultimate truth.
   - Ultimate Truth[462] (*paramārtha-satya*[463]): the way things really are, as *Buddhas* behold things with enlightened eyes — empty, beyond thought and description.

[457] There have, in fact, been various attempts to move the focus of Buddhism away from the monastery over the centuries, but, in fairness, it must be said that they have had little success. Buddhism has always gravitated towards the monastic side of the spectrum.
[458] Pāḷi *suññatā* "emptiness, void."
[459] Pāḷi *anattā* "no soul."
[460] Also known as "relative truth."
[461] Pāḷi *sammuti-sacca* "conventional truth, commonly-accepted truth."
[462] Also known as "absolute truth."
[463] Pāḷi *paramattha-sacca* "ultimate truth."

10. The Identity of *Nirvāṇa* and *Saṁsāra*: The uncompromising spirit of Mahāyāna logic tears down all forms of separation, even that which distinguishes *nirvāṇa* from *saṁsāra*. In terms of ultimate truth, *nirvāṇa* is *saṁsāra*, and vice-versa. There is no split or separation. This, needless to say, throws the ordinary world into a new light — it is, indeed, the transcendental world of true reality, the world of *Buddhas* and *Bodhisattvas*, though their mental defilements (*kleśas*) prevent ordinary mortals from seeing it as such.
11. New Scriptures: The new Mahāyāna ideas, ideals, and orientations were proclaimed in a body of new *sūtras*, which Edward Conze has described as "one of the most magnificent outbursts of creative energy known to human history and it was sustained for about four to five centuries."[464] Often, the historical *Buddha*, Buddha Gotama, is cited as the author of these scriptures, and fictitious stories had to be created to explain why the works in question took so long to come to light. It might be claimed, for instance, that the *Buddha* had decided that a particular *sūtra* had to be hidden away until the world was ready to receive the unusually deep teachings that it contained.[465]

    Possibly, the Mahāyāna Buddhists actually believed that these scriptures came from the same source as the original ones, though that is clearly not the case. They are usually much longer and less immediately accessible than the original scriptures, more elaborate and mystical, more poetic, and often encrusted with rich imagery and other ornate stylistic embellishments. As stated by Sangharakshita: "Spiritual truths are conveyed, not through the medium of words alone, but symbolically by means of gorgeous phantasmagoria." Philosophically, the point of view taken is that of full enlightenment, no less.

The term "Mahāyāna" was coined by the Mahāyānists themselves to distinguish their school from their predecessors, whom they dubbed followers of the "Hīnayāna," or "Lesser Vehicle." This, of course, implies a value judgment, and, indeed, it does appear that rivalry did occasionally creep into the relations between the two traditions. The Hīnayāna followers were sometimes said to have coldly and selfishly opted for a lesser spiritual goal, namely Arahantship,[466] and that, even if successful, they had not "finished what they had to do." The Hīnayāna teachings were sometimes dismissed as low-grade *Dharma* strictly for beginners and those of limited spiritual understanding and potential. In short, the Mahāyāna was supreme. Needless to say, these views were not accepted by the other schools.[467]

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[464] Edward Conze, *A Short History of Buddhism* (London: George Allen & Unwin [1980]), p. 45.

[465] This clearly does not accord with the *Buddha's* own statement that He did not teach with a "closed fist," that is, He did not hold anything back, or teach an esoteric set of doctrines.

[466] As noted here, some Mahāyāna Buddhists have expressed the view that Hīnayāna Buddhism is selfish because it teaches that people should seek their own liberation. But how can a selfish person attain enlightenment? He cannot — it is impossible. There is nothing selfish in the noble ideal of Arahantship, for Arahantship can only be attained by eradicating all forms of selfishness.

[467] Theravādin Buddhists follow orthodox traditions that were established by the *Buddha* himself. Indeed, the Theravādins maintain that their school alone is orthodox and that all other schools are degenerations

Competitive sectarianism must have been more apparent than real, however, for the more sensitive and sincere practitioners would have been keenly aware that it was highly discordant with the kindly, tolerant spirit set by the *Buddha* Himself. Moreover, the Mahāyānists and Hīnayānists lived together in the same monasteries and shared much else in common.

The Hīnayānists remained in the majority until possibly as late as the eighth century CE. They probably did not view the new scriptures with much favor, but, on the whole, they mostly maintained a noble silence about Mahāyāna developments, which must inevitably have influenced them to some extent.[468] Philosophically, they went on quietly developing their own *Abhidharma*, which reached its apogee around the fourth century CE.

The only one of the early schools that is still in existence at the present time is the Theravādin School. Regrettably, the newcomer setting out to explore Buddhism will still find the Hīnayāna/Mahāyāna division something of a minefield, because vestiges of the old sectarian propaganda in favor of the Mahāyāna still linger. In practice, it would, however, be entirely wrong to think of the Theravāda as being for beginners or for people of limited spiritual understanding or potential and the Mahāyāna for those of greater ability. Both traditions point in the same direction (though from slightly different angles), and both have a great deal to offer. It may well be that a particular individual might find him or herself more at home in one or the other of these traditions. Even though the Theravāda represents the more conservative tradition, it has not stood still over the past two and a half millennia. Many sincere practitioners can be found nowadays among followers of the Theravādin School who have kept their tradition a living and vibrant one, while there are certainly followers of the Mahāyāna School who have ossified and lost the vital spiritual spark. The opposite is true too.

In spite of the differences between the two schools, there is no disagreement concerning the Teachings as contained in the sacred canonical texts (the *Tripiṭaka*[469]). Moreover, both the Theravāda and the Mahāyāna are one in their reverence for the *Buddha*.

The areas of agreement between the two schools are as follows:

1. Both accept the *Buddha* as the Teacher.
2. The Four Noble Truths are exactly the same in both schools.

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and corruptions of the original teaching. Consequently, they totally reject the Mahāyāna scriptures and doctrines — they do not consider them to represent the authentic Teachings of the *Buddha*.

[468] An example here would be the so-called "*Bodhisattva* Ideal," which has long since been incorporated into Theravādin Buddhism. Originally, the designation "*Bodhisattva*" was applied exclusively to Prince Siddhattha before His Enlightenment and to His former existences. The *Buddha* Himself used this term when speaking of His life prior to attaining Enlightenment. Bodhisattvahood is neither mentioned nor recommended as an ideal higher than or an alternative to Arahantship; nor is there any record in the Pāḷi scriptures of a disciple declaring it as his aspiration. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 41.

[469] Pāḷi *Tipiṭaka*.

3. The Noble Eightfold Path is the same in both schools.
4. The doctrine of Dependent Origination is the same in both schools.
5. Both reject the idea of a supreme being who created and governs this world.
6. Both accept *anicca* (impermance), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (non-self) and *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom) without any difference.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the terms "Hīnayāna" and "Mahāyāna" are later introductions and are unknown in the early canonical texts or their commentaries. Historically, the Theravāda existed long before these terms came into being. Theravādin Buddhism was introduced to Śri Lanka in the third century BCE during the reign of King Asoka of India. At that time, the Mahāyāna School did not even exist — it developed some three centuries later. The Theravāda remained intact in Śri Lanka and did not play any role in the disputes between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Schools that arose at a later period in India. Therefore, it is not legitimate to include Theravāda in either of these two categories.

The Mādhyamika School

The Mādhyamika School was founded by Nāgārjuna,[470] a south Indian monk-philosopher of genius whose birth was, according to legend, predicted by the *Buddha* Himself and who was reported to have received instruction from the *nāgas* (serpent kings) in their palace beneath the sea. His major work is the *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā* ("Fundamentals of the Middle Way").

In the great tradition set by the *Buddha*, Nāgārjuna devised new ways for driving us into the arms of the inconceivable. Rather than propounding a philosophy as such, he advocated a method, the technical term for which is "dialectic," which, if rigorously applied, would reveal the inherent absurdity of all philosophies. In this way, the practitioner would ideally be liberated from all views.

Dependent Origination is also important to Nāgārjuna's philosophy, and he connects it with *śūnyatā*[471] ("emptiness"). To see that nothing whatsoever exists "from its own side," but always in dependence, that nothing is absolute but that all is relative, this is to see emptiness.

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[470] Indian Buddhist monk-philosopher and founder of the Mādhyamika ("Middle Path") School, whose clarification of the concept of *śūnyatā* ("emptiness") is regarded as an intellectual and spiritual achievement of the highest order. Hardly any reliable dates (second/third century CE) for his life are known. He is recognized as a patriarch by several later Buddhist schools. The two basic works that are substantially his and that have remained available in Sanskrit are the *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā* ("Fundamentals of the Middle Way") (more commonly known as *Mādhyamika Kārikā*) and *Vigrahavyāvartanī* ("Averting the Arguments"), both critical analyses of views about the origin of existence, the means of knowledge, and the nature of reality. (This footnote is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

[471] Pāḷi *suññatā* "emptiness, void, insubstantiality." In Theravādin Buddhism, *suññatā* refers exclusively to the *anattā* doctrine, that is, the insubstantiality of all phenomena relating to a self, soul, or any kind of ego entity: "Void is the world … because it is void of a self and anything belonging to a self."

Nāgārjuna's philosophy has frequently been compared to the modern linguistic philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein.[472] At the end of his great work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922), Wittgenstein argues that his philosophical arguments are self-annihilating. They serve merely as a ladder to take the reader to the outer limits of what can meaningfully be said in words. The person who understands this philosophy will, so to speak, kick the ladder away after he has climbed it and arrive at some mysterious new and most accurate mode of understanding; that is, "He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright" (Proposition 6.53). Nāgārjuna similarly tried in his dialectical way to lead us beyond words and concepts to a new level of consciousness.

In the sixth century CE, two sub-schools of the Mādhyamika emerged: (1) the Prāsaṅgika, founded by Buddhapālita, which maintained the rigorous dialectics inaugurated by Nāgārjuna, and (2) the Svātantrika, founded by Bhāvaviveka, which attempted to temper the apparently bleak nihilism of Nāgārjuna's approach.[473]

The Yogācārin School

The Yogācārin (or Vijñānavāda) School flourished in the fourth century CE, and its principal proponents were Asaṅga and his younger brother Vasubandhu, who came from northwest India.

The Yogācārins took a more positive approach than the Mādhyamikas. They maintained that all is mind, or consciousness, hence their central doctrine of *citta-mātra*: "mind-only" or "nothing but consciousness." Indeed, "Cittamātra" is yet another name for this school. According to this view, the objects of the world do not exist *per se* but are created from and by the mind. To explain how this is done, the Yogācārins put forth

[472] Ludwig Josef Johann Wittgenstein (1889—1951) possessed an extraordinary intellect. He was born into one of the wealthiest and most remarkable families of Habsburg Vienna. His father, Karl Wittgenstein, was an industrialist of exceptional talent and energy who rose to become one of the leading figures in the Austrian iron and steel industry. Although his family was originally Jewish, Karl Wittgenstein had been brought up as a Protestant, and his wife, Leopoldine, also from a partly Jewish family, had been raised as a Catholic. Karl and Leopoldine had eight children, of whom Ludwig was the youngest. The family possessed both money and talent in abundance, and their home became a center of Viennese cultural life during one of its most dynamic phases. Many of the great writers, artists, and intellectuals of *fin de siècle* Vienna — including Karl Kraus, Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka, and Sigmund Freud — were regular visitors to the Wittgensteins' home, and the family's musical evenings were attended by Johannes Brahms, Gustav Mahler, and Bruno Walter, among others. Leopoldine Wittgenstein played the piano to a remarkably high standard, as did many of her children. One of them, Paul, became a famous concert pianist, and another, Hans, was regarded as a musical prodigy comparable to Mozart. But the family also was beset with tragedy. Three of Ludwig's brothers — Hans, Rudolf, and Kurt — committed suicide, the first two after rebelling against their father's wish that they pursue careers in industry. (This footnote is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

[473] For a detailed discussion of Mādhyamika philosophy, cf. T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of the Mādhyamika System* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. [second edition 1960]). Warning: this is an extremely difficult work, which demands an in-depth knowledge of Indian and Buddhist philosophy and literature and a thorough understanding of Sanskrit technical terms on the part of the reader. It is not for beginners.

the idea of a store consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*), a kind of collective unconscious in which the seeds of all potential phenomena are stored and from which they ceaselessly pour into manifestation. Delusion (*moha*), also a creation of the mind, consists in taking these for real, whereas they are, in truth, just projections of mind. The cure for this sickness is seeing through the illusion, and by means of the practice of meditation (from which the whole orientation of the school undoubtedly sprang), establishing a pure consciousness devoid of all content. This is called "revolution at the basis."

The Yogācārins are also credited with having raised Buddhist logic to a high level of development. The greatest Yogācārin logician was Dignāga[474] (second half of the fourth century CE), a pupil of Vasubandhu. Buddhists had, in fact, debated with each other since the earliest times, and this, in itself, may have contributed to the division of Buddhism into so many schools. Buddhists also pitted their wits against representatives of Hindu sects, such as the Sāṁkhyas,[475] in great public debates. Not only was prestige at stake in these debates, but often the patronage of the rich and the powerful. Buddhist logic was considered so formidable in debate that one Hindu is reputed to have resorted to dastardly underhanded means to learn it for the benefit of his own faction. Public debating has survived in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition to this day; it involves highly mannered procedures, including dramatic physical gestures.

Concluding Remarks

Early Buddhism was not a religion in the usual sense of the term. It was an Order of monks and nuns held together by certain rules of discipline (*vinaya*) and reverence for the *human* Teacher. It enjoined a very austere moral code, primarily for the ordained. But there was no element of worship, no religious fervor, no devotion to a transcendent being. No cosmic function was assigned to the *Buddha*; He was just an exalted person and no more. His existence after *parinibbāna* was a matter of doubt; this was one of the inexpressibles. The rise of the Mahāyāna was, then and there, the rise of Buddhism as a religion. For the Mahāyāna, the *Buddha* is not a historical person. He is the Essence of all Being (*dharmakāya*); He has a glorious Divine Form (*sambhogakāya*), and He assumes, at will, various forms to deliver beings from delusion and to propagate the *Dharma* (*nirmāṇakāya*). In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the essential unity of all beings became an integral part of spiritual life. Worship and devotion to *Buddhas* and *Bodhisattvas* was introduced.

The highly sophisticated philosophical ideas summarized here demonstrate how far Buddhism had developed from being a simple path of homeless ascetics living in caves and forests. Monasteries had, of course, originated during the *Buddha's* own time,

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[474] Dignāga's main disciple was Dharmakīrti.

[475] One of the six orthodox philosophies of Hinduism. Founded by Kapila (dates unknown), it teaches that the universe arises through the union of nature with consciousness. According to the Sāṁkhya view, there are as many souls and units of consciousness as there are living beings. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), p. 303.

and, as the centuries progressed and Buddhism became favored with the patronage of the rich and powerful — notably, of course, King Asoka —, those monasteries became large and splendid establishments. To meet the needs of scholarship, some acquired extensive libraries and attracted scholarly monks. The greatest grew into monastic universities of international repute housing hundreds of teachers and thousands of scholars. The greatest of all was Nālandā, near the modern town of Rajgir in the northeastern Indian state of Bihar; it was a Mahāyāna establishment. The largest Hīnayāna establishment, on the other hand, was Valabhī, in western India. It was equal in fame to Nālandā.

Nālandā was apparently vast and architecturally very fine, graced with beautiful sculpture and grounds; it had "rows of monasteries with their series of turrets licking the clouds." Its campus included schools of study, lecture-halls, residential quarters, and numerous many-storied buildings to accommodate its wealth of manuscripts. All this was properly administered and subject to close regulation, fixed penalties being imposed for any breach of the rules, and the eight-hour working day was run strictly by a water-clock. The students not only studied Mahāyāna doctrines but the teachings of the other schools as well; also the *Vedas* and other aspects of Brahmanism, along with secular subjects like logic, grammar, mathematics, medicine, etc. Degrees were granted to successful students. Nālandā was extremely financially well-endowed, and its monks were not only well fed but were waited on by two lay servants apiece; moreover, if they went outside, they were provided with elephants or litter transport. Nāgārjuna is said to have worked at Nālandā.

Sadly, this great establishment, a unique treasury of profound learning, was ruthlessly destroyed during the Muslim depredations. When a Tibetan pilgrim visited its site in 1235 CE, he found only one very old monk teaching Sanskrit grammar to some students in the burnt-out rubble. Word then came that another raiding party of Muslims was on the way, whereupon monk and students wisely made themselves scarce until the danger had passed. The Tibetan pilgrim was not able find any of the books he had come looking for. ■

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The Sangha[476]

TWO TYPES OF FOLLOWERS

From the very beginning, there were two types of followers of the *Buddha*: (1) the *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunīs*, that is, the Monks and Nuns; and (2) the *Gahapatis*, or "householders", also called (m.) "*upāsaka*", (f.) "*upāsikā*", that is, "lay follower". A third type, the forest renunciants, may have functioned alongside and in addition to the monastic and lay communities.

The *Buddha* wisely recognized that comparatively very few men and women would ever attempt, and fewer still succeed in the attempt, to follow His path throughout its four difficult stages to the goal. Thus, with practical good sense, He a set up an Order of Monks and Nuns who could devote all of their time and energy to the attainment of the goal, and He opened that Order to all, regardless of caste or social standing.

The lay disciples, on the other hand, continued to live ordinary lives in the world, marrying, raising a family, earning a livelihood, etc. Though the goal was available to them as well, its attainment was considered far more difficult, and it appears that the majority did not advance beyond the first stage, Stream-Entry (*Sotāpatti*). All, however, were certain of finally attaining the goal.

Admission as a lay follower of the *Buddha* was very simple, consisting merely of accepting the Four Noble Truths and the repetition of the formula of the Three Refuges:

Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	I go to the *Buddha* for Refuge.
Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	I go to the *Dhamma* for Refuge.
Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	I go to the *Sangha* for Refuge.
Dutiyampi, Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A second time, I go to the *Buddha* for Refuge.
Dutiyampi, Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A second time, I go to the *Dhamma* for Refuge.
Dutiyampi, Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A second time, I go to the *Sangha* for Refuge.
Tatiyampi, Buddhaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A third time, I go to the *Buddha* for Refuge.
Tatiyampi, Dhammaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A third time, I go to the *Dhamma* for Refuge.
Tatiyampi, Saṅghaṁ saraṇaṁ gacchāmi.	A third time, I go to the *Sangha* for Refuge.

[476] This chapter is adapted from Chapter IV, Sangha, of Henry H. Tilbe's book, *Pāḷi Buddhism* (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press [1900]), pp. 36—48.

After admission, the only absolute requirement was the observance of the Five Precepts (these are discussed in detail in Chapter 22). However, the lay disciples were admonished to observe the entire ethical system and to undertake more or less intense and protracted meditation, and the door was always open for them to join the *Sangha* if, at any time, they became earnest enough to abandon the life of a householder and become mendicant ascetics. Even as householders, they were encouraged to undertake more serious and extended observances of the *Dhamma*, especially on Uposatha Days and during longer or shorter periods of voluntary vows.

THE SANGHA

As noted above, the *Buddha* recognized the inherent difficulties to be surmounted by those who were struggling to extinguish craving and ignorance. He clearly taught that only those who were prepared to utterly, fully, completely abandon attachment to the world might be successful in attaining the goal. In practical terms, such a life was only possible to a hermit, an ascetic, or a cenobitic Monk or Nun. The very nature of His system, therefore, necessitated the establishment of an Order of renunciants.

It must be clearly understood that the *Sangha* was in no sense a priesthood. Since there were no sacrifices, no religious rites, no ceremonies of any kind admitted in the *Buddha's* system, there could be no class to whom such functions belonged, and, since there was no God, no prayer, and no worship, it would be manifest absurdity for any to claim, or to be assigned, mediatory power or other priestly rights, duties, or privileges.

Moreover, the *Sangha* was not a hierarchy. No one ever took vows of obedience, and there were no distinctions of place or of power, except that seniority and purity of character were beautifully honored through the voluntary deference of one's peers.

The *Sangha* was simply a band of the *Buddha's* most ardent followers, each of whom was strenuously cultivating that virtue (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) which alone would bring about the extinction of craving — *nibbāna*. At the same time, the members of the *Sangha* were actively spreading, for the benefit of others, the blessed knowledge of the path, which they themselves had received.

At first, the members of the *Sangha* were considered equals, and admission was easy and simple, consisting merely of the repetition of the Refuges. Later, admission was more guarded, and a distinction was made between a novice (*sāmaṇera*) and a fully-ordained member, an "ascetic" (*samaṇa*), or "Monk" (*bhikkhu*).

A novice might be ordained by any *Bhikkhu* who had been a full member of the *Sangha* for at least ten years. The candidate had to be at least fifteen years old, or, if a child, had to have the consent of his parents. He must be free from contagious diseases, consumption, and fits; he must not be a slave, or a debtor, or in royal service; and he must have provided himself with suitable robes. Bearing his robes in hand, while still wearing the clothing of a householder, he approached a *Bhikkhu* and requested admission to the *Sangha*. If his request were granted, his hair was cut, and his robes were donned. Then,

he knelt while repeating the Refuges and took a vow to observe the Ten Precepts (these are discussed in Chapter 16).

This admission as a novice was called "going forth" (*pabbajjā*), the thought being that he had gone forth from household life to homelessness.

Full ordination was a more formal and difficult matter. The candidate had to be at least twenty years old and, generally, and had to have been, for a longer or shorter period, according to circumstances, under instruction as a novice. One who had been a novice from his fifteenth year would have spent at least five years under such instruction, while, in the case of mature men, the two admissions were either simultaneous or immediately successive. The candidate was required beforehand to select a *Bhikkhu* of at least ten years' standing in the *Sangha*, who was to act as his instructor for the five years immediately following his entrance into the Order. He was also required to be provided with robes and alms-bowl. An assembly consisting of not fewer than ten *Bhikkhus* was then convened, presided over by a *Bhikkhu* who had been a full member of the *Sangha* for at least ten years, and the candidate had to appear before this assembly and request admission to full membership in the Order. In answer to questions, he satisfied the assembly as to his age; to his freedom from disqualifying diseases; to the fact that he was not a slave, a debtor, or in royal service; to his provision of robes and alms-bowl; and to his being a real man and not a "non-human" being such as *nāga* or *yakkha*, which can assume human form. If the candidate was found to be satisfactory, he was led aside and reclad in his mendicant robes. Then, bearing his alms-bowl, he reappeared before the assembly, thrice repeated the Three Refuges, and again took a solemn vow to observe the Ten Precepts. He was most emphatically warned against the "Four Forbidden Acts" (*cattāri-akaraṇīyāni*) and admonished to trust only the "Four Resources" (*cattāro-nissayā*). Then, if no one in the assembly objected to his admission, silence was construed as consent, and the presiding *Bhikkhu* declared him admitted.

The Four Forbidden Acts are:

1. Sexual activity of any kind;
2. Taking anything not freely given;
3. Taking a human life or inducing another to commit suicide;
4. Falsely boasting of supernormal powers.

The breaking of any one of these prohibitions was inevitably followed by irrevocable expulsion from the *Sangha*.

The Four Resources were not absolutely binding, since, in every case, lay followers were encouraged to furnish, and the members of the *Sangha* were allowed to accept, better. But they were a *Bhikkhu's* only resources when left to himself. They are:

1. Alms collected in bits, for food;
2. Old rags from the dust heap, for clothing;
3. Fermented cow urine, for medicine;
4. Shelter of trees, for residence.

The two great requirements in the *Sangha*, voluntary poverty and purity of life, are emphasized in these two lists.

Theoretically, poverty was to be all but absolute. A member of the Order was allowed to own only eight articles:

1—3. The three separate pieces of his robes (under-robe, upper-robe, and double-robe);
4. An undergarment;
5. An alms-bowl;
6. A razor;
7. A needle;
8. A water strainer.

His food was to consist of whatever was collected in his alms-bowl as a result of going on alms-rounds from house to house. His robes were to be patched together by himself out of old yellowed rags collected from the dust heaps and cemeteries. Finally, he was expected to dwell in the open air at the foot of a sheltering tree or in a little hut built by himself of leaves and grass.

Practically, however, these austerities were not strictly enforced. For, in all these respects, minor indulgences were allowed by the *Buddha*, and with his full consent.

Though the *Buddha* held that the quiet life of a hermit in the forest was most conducive to meditation, which he considered so essential to subjective improvement and to the acquisition of wisdom, yet, for missionary and practical reasons, he permitted residence in a Vihāra, or "Monastery", provided by the laity, in the suburbs of a village or town, especially during the Vassa, or "Rains" (the monsoon season), and life in Vihāras became almost universal. At first, these Vihāras probably consisted of small huts (*kuṭī*) for individual *Bhikkhus*, but these huts soon gave way to rich and commodious buildings with accommodations for crowds of *Bhikkhus*, with assembly halls, dining rooms, and sleeping apartments. They were generally built in parks or forests adjoining villages and towns — far enough away to be free from confusion and noise, but near enough for ready accessibility. Some of the Vihāras, where the *Buddha* Himself often dwelt and where He is said to have given much of His instruction, are very famous, such as Veḷuvana at Rājagāha, provided by King Bimbisāra, and Jetavana at Sāvatthī, provided by the wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍika.

The *Buddha* also allowed the eating of food prepared and brought to Vihāras by pious lay disciples and even the acceptance of invitations to go to the homes of the laity and eat what was prepared for them there. Of course, on such occasions, the very best possible provisions and service would be provided by the pious host, but animal food was generally, though not always, omitted. There seems never to have been any very strong prohibition against eating meat, provided someone else had killed and prepared it — even the *Buddha* Himself is said to have died from eating tainted pork.

However, while these indulgences in food were allowed, the regular rule of going from house to house with the alms-bowl to collect whatever was freely given was quite

generally adhered to. In eating, each *Bhikkhu* went apart and ate alone, while, at the same time, meditating on the impermanence of the body and assuring himself that he ate only for the purpose of sustaining life. He must not pick and choose from what was in his bowl, but eat everything as it came.

The rule concerning clothing was seldom, if ever, enforced. From the very first, the laity were permitted and encouraged to provide members of the *Sangha* with the necessary robes (*cīvara*), and special merit (*puñña*) was supposed to accrue to the pious lay disciple who observed, with commendable generosity, "Robe Month" (*cīvaramāsa*) at the close of each "Rains". Under no circumstances whatsoever was a member of the *Sangha* to take steps to provide himself with robes, other than according to the original rule of picking rags from the dust heap and sewing them together.

A *Bhikkhu* was allowed to have only three robes, of which he usually wore two and kept the third for cold times.

If the robes provided by the laity were of new cloth, the cloth must be torn into pieces and sewn together.

The robes consisted of three separate pieces: (1) the under-robe — a long strip fastened around the waist; (2) the upper-robe — a large, rectangular piece of cloth that covered the upper and lower part of the body; and (3) the double-robe — similar to the upper-robe but consisting of two layers. The shaven head was always left bare.

Later on, sandals and an umbrella were also allowed, and a large fan was carried as a screen to shut out sights likely to disturb the calm of subjective contemplation.

The duties and routine of daily life in the *Sangha* were very simple.

First of all was the necessity for discipline within the Order itself. Members of the *Sangha* had little contact with the laity; they were not spiritual or moral overseers, and, in no sense, were they pastors to the masses of lay people among whom they lived and to whom they looked for support. However, it was essential that they maintain the disciplinary rules and avoid the prohibitions laid down for the *Sangha*.

Except in cases of violation of the more serious prohibitions and when a member voluntarily requested the assembled members to point out any fault noticed in his life, no charges were ever brought by one against another, but all matters of discipline came up on voluntary confession of fault.

On Uposatha Days, all members of the *Sangha* assembled in their regular communities to listen to the *Pātimokkha* — the body of rules for the governing of the Order, even in the most trivial details —, and each was expected to confess any conscious infraction in the observance of the rules. Silence was considered a claim of guiltlessness. In case of violation of one or more of the Four Forbidden Acts, immediate and irrevocable expulsion from the *Sangha* was inflicted. In other, more minor violations, penances, more or less severe, were imposed.

Instruction was an important duty. The preceptors must give instruction for five years to those who had selected them at the time of admittance into full membership in the Order. The novices were under more or less constant instruction. In general, any saintly or capable *Bhikkhu* was expected to impart his greater attainments to those who desired his instruction. Outside their own membership, there was much instruction of the

laity and active missionary effort in propagating the Teachings among those who had not yet been exposed to or who had not yet accepted the *Buddha's* Teachings. And, in later times at least, in every land where Buddhism established itself, schools were opened in connection with the Vihāras for the daily instruction of all the boys of the community, both in the *Dhamma* and in the ordinary branches of secular learning, so that, in Buddhist communities, a man was rarely met who had not received the rudiments of an education.

Meditation, however, was the most important concern in a *Bhikkhu's* life, for the wisdom so essential to his advancement along the stages of the path was predominantly that which was developed from his own inner experience in the practice of meditation. The following five subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) were of particular importance:

1. Loving-kindness (*mettā*);
2. Compassion (*karuṇā*);
3. Sympathetic joy (*muditā*);
4. Equanimity (*upekkhā*);
5. Impurity (*asubha*).

One objective in the practice of meditation was the cultivation of the *jhānas*, or "absorptions", in which increasingly subtle states of serenity (*samatha*) were attained.

To attain the *jhānas*, the meditator would begin by eliminating the unwholesome mental states obstructing inner collectedness, generally grouped together as the "Five Hindrances" (*pañcanīvaraṇa*):

1. Desire for gratification of the senses (*kāmacchanda*);
2. Ill-will (*vyāpāda*);
3. Sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*);
4. Restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*);
5. Doubt, or indecisiveness (*vicikicchā*).

The mind's absorption on its object was brought about by five opposing mental states:

1. Applied thought, or initial application (*vitakka*);
2. Sustained thought, or sustained application (*vicāra*);
3. Rapture, ecstasy, or zest (*pīti*);
4. Happiness (*sukha*);
5. One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

These states are called the "*jhāna* factors" (*jhānanga*), because they lift the mind to the level of the first *jhāna* and remain there as its defining components. After reaching the first *jhāna*, the ardent meditator could go on to reach the remaining three *jhānas*, which was done by eliminating the coarser factors in each *jhāna*.

Beyond these four *jhānas*, there is another fourfold set of higher meditative states which deepen still further the element of serenity (*samatha*). These attainments (*āruppā*) are:

1. The base of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*);
2. The base of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*);
3. The base of nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*);
4. The base of neither perception nor non-perception (*n'eva saññā-n'asaññāyatana*).

In the Pāḷi Commentaries, these latter four states came to be called the "Four Immaterial Absorptions" (*arūpajjhāna*), and the four preceding states were renamed, for the sake of clarity, the "Four Fine-Material Absorptions" (*rūpajjhāna*). Often, the two sets were combined as the "Eight Absorptions" (*aṭṭhajjhānāni*), or "Eight Attainments" (*aṭṭhasamāpattiyo*).

Another subject in meditation was the cultivation of concentration (*samādhi*), a state of calmness frequently confounded with *jhāna*. The term, however, has a wider application. *Samādhi* is a necessary preliminary to *jhāna* and always accompanies it in all its stages. Three levels of *samādhi* are distinguished: (1) preliminary concentration (*parikamma-samādhi*), which is present whenever one directs one's mind to any of the various subjects of concentration; (2) access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), which is the level of concentration that approaches, or comes near to, the first *jhāna*; and (3) attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), which is the level of concentration that is present during the *jhānas*.

There were many different exercises for the development of concentration. One of the most common was "Mindfulness of Breathing" (*ānāpānasati*).

The concentration exercises, as such, only served the purpose of developing serenity (*samatha*) and sharpening concentration (*samādhi*). Serenity, however, was the fundamental and indispensable condition for the successful development of insight (*vipassanā*). And it was this insight alone that had the power to confer entrance to the Four Stages of Sainthood and, thus, to free beings forever from the ten Fetters that bind them to the never-ending cycle of rebirth and suffering.

Cleanliness and sanitation were highly valued, and frequent baths, the washing of robes, and caring for the Vihāras and their grounds were obligatory duties for members of the *Sangha*. The *Sangha* was frequently relieved of the last duty, however, by pious lay followers who gained much merit by this service. When no lay followers were available to undertake this duty, it generally became the responsibility of the novices.

In the ordinary daily routine of life, the early morning hours, often long before daybreak, were spent in meditation, in the recitation of parts of the *Dhamma*, and in instruction. Later in the morning came the alms-rounds for collecting food, and, just before noon, the one substantial meal of the day. After the midday meal, there was a short period of rest, followed by more instruction and more meditation. In the evening, there were quiet walks in the well-kept grounds, or quiet conversation, or meditation, this last often extending far into the night. Duties requiring manual labor were performed in

the early morning or in the evening. Manual labor, however, was considered no help to the religious life, but, rather, a hindrance, as interfering with meditation, and it was never engaged in except, and so far, as was actually required in cases where the *Sangha* could not be, or happened not to be, relieved by pious lay followers.

On the death of His father, King Suddhodana, the *Buddha* agreed to the creation of an Order for women, and His stepmother, Queen Pajāpatī, and former wife, Princess Yasodharā, were the first members. A member of this Order was called a "female ascetic" (*samaṇī*), or a "Nun" (*bhikkhunī*), and the Order itself was called the "*Bhikkhunī Sangha*".

This Order was, in almost every respect, an exact counterpart for that for the *Bhikkhus*. It was not, however, independent, but was, in everything, subordinate to the regular *Sangha*. In all important matters, the decisions of their own communities had to be confirmed by a community of *Bhikkhus* before they were valid. All instruction was by *Bhikkhus*, and their *Pātimokkha* confession had to be presided over by a *Bhikkhu* appointed to that duty by the regular *Sangha*.

No *Bhikkhunī* was ever allowed to dwell alone, anywhere, nor, any number of them together, in a forest. They had to dwell in groups in Vihāras near some village or town. Generally, their Vihāras were near to those of the *Bhikkhus*, but the two Vihāras were never connected.

No association of the two Orders was ever allowed except those for instruction, for the *Pātimokkha* confession, and for the confirmation of the acts of the *Bhikkhunī Sangha*, as mentioned above, and, in all such cases, there must always be two or more *Bhikkhus* present — no *Bhikkhu* was ever allowed, under any circumstances, to meet and talk with a *Bhikkhunī* alone.

For both these Orders, there were few times of special importance. Since there were no sacrifices, no offerings, no rituals, and no worship in the *Buddha's* system, there were, of course no holy days set aside for such things.

SPECIAL DAYS

The *Buddha*, however, realized the need for special days and provided for that need by adopting and adapting the special fasting days of the Brahmins. These "Uposatha Days" — the *Buddha* retained the Brahmin name — were two in each month, the days of the new-moon and of the full-moon. (At a later date, the quarter moon days were added for lay followers.) By lamp light, in the evening, on these Uposatha Days, the Orders met, in their respective communities, for the *Pātimokkha* confession. No one was allowed to be absent, except in the case of severe illness, and, even then, not unless he could assure the rest of the community, through some other member who was present, that he was guiltless of any infraction of the rules and prohibitions.

The "Rains" (*vassa*) included the four months of the annual monsoon season, which began sometime in June or July. During this period, all members of the Order were to dwell permanently in Vihāras in proximity to towns or villages. There was no

travel except the daily rounds for food. This rule was partly for health reasons, the forest dwellings, leaf-huts, and traveling about being fraught with great danger to the *Bhikkhus* themselves, in the excessive dampness of that season. But, it was mostly enacted because a complaint had been made that the *Bhikkhus*, trampling about during that season, when the country was teeming with insect and vegetable life, were crushing and destroying life and, thereby, thoughtlessly violating the precept against killing.

In the enforced lull in their ordinary missionary activities and their solitary meditation, they generally paid more attention to giving instructions to the laity who visited them in increasing numbers during the rainy season.

"Invitation" (*pavāraṇā*) was a ceremony at the close of the rainy season retreat when all of the *Bhikkhus* met and each asked the rest to point out any fault in him while they had been together during the "Rains". Then, after all confessions had been made and all faults redressed, there was rejoicing that the "Rains" had been passed in harmony.

"Robe Month" (*cīvaramāsa*) was the month immediately following the "Rains". It was the time specially set apart for providing the *Bhikkhus* with necessary robes.

"Extraordinary Fortnight" (*paṭihārakapakkha*) was originally the first half of Robe Month, but the term was also applied to the whole month and even to the whole "Rains".

From the beginning, these times and seasons were made, for the laity, in a certain sense, "holy days". The laity were encouraged to consider such times particularly suitable for extraordinary efforts in piety and generosity. Special merit was to be gained by observing the Eight Precepts at these times and by generously supplying the *Bhikkhus* with such things as they needed. Very early on, the practice grew of laying aside worldly work and concerns on Uposatha Days, of taking generous portions of good food to the Vihāras for the *Sangha*, and of spending the day there listening to the reading and exposition of the *Dhamma* and/or practicing meditation. The whole of the "Rains" was spent in the same way by the more pious, who then refrained entirely from all animal food, though they were free to eat it at other times. Though some Western scholars have referred to this as "Buddhist Lent", this term is really inappropriate and should never be used.

The greatest merit in connection with these "holy days", however, was to be gained by observing the Precepts and attending to the needs of the *Sangha* during the "Extraordinary Fortnight", and most especially by furnishing members of the *Sangha* with robes at that time. ■

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PART THREE

The Dhamma

21

The Four Noble Truths

Thus have I heard.

On one occasion, the Exalted One was residing in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares. Thereupon, the Exalted One addressed the group of five Bhikkhus as follows:

THE TWO EXTREMES

"There are these two extremes, O Bhikkhus, which should be avoided by one who has renounced the world: indulgence in sensory pleasures — this is base, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and profitless — and addiction to self-mortification — this is painful, ignoble, and profitless.

THE MIDDLE PATH

"Abandoning both these extremes, the Tathāgata has comprehended the Middle Path, which promotes seeing and knowledge and which tends to peace, higher wisdom, enlightenment, and nibbāna.

"What, O Bhikkhus, is that Middle Path comprehended by the Tathāgata which promotes seeing and knowledge and which tends to peace, higher wisdom, enlightenment, and nibbāna?

"It is, indeed, that Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

"This, O Bhikkhus, is the Middle Path comprehended by the Tathāgata.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

"Now this, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to Suffering: Birth [earthly existence], indeed, is suffering; old age is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; likewise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. To be conjoined with what one dislikes is suffering, to be

separated from what one likes is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging are suffering.

"And again, O Bhikkhus, this is the Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering: It is that craving, associated with enjoyment and desire and seeking pleasure everywhere, which produces separate existence and leads to future births, and which keeps lingering on and on, that is the cause of suffering. In other words, it is craving for sense-pleasure, the desire for birth in a world of separateness, and the desire for existence to end.

"And this, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering: It is the complete cessation, giving up, abandoning of craving; it is release and detachment from craving.

"And this, once again, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering: It is, indeed, that Noble Eightfold Path: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. The Middle Path, O Bhikkhus, leads to nibbāna.

THE TWELVE ASPECTS OF WISDOM

"This is the Noble Path as to Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Path of Suffering should be perceived. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Path of Suffering has been perceived. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This is the Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering should be eradicated. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering has been eradicated. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This is the Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering should be realized. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering has been realized. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This is the Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering should be developed. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

"This Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering has been developed. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

ENLIGHTENMENT NOT YET GAINED

"As long, O Bhikkhus, as the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Four Noble Truths, under their three aspects and twelve modes, was not perfectly clear to me, so long did I not acknowledge, in this world, inclusive of gods, māras, and brahmās and among the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment.

ENLIGHTENMENT GAINED

"When the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Truths, under their three aspects and twelve modes, became perfectly clear to me, then only did I acknowledge, in this world, inclusive of gods, māras, and brahmās and among the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment.

"And there arose in me the knowledge and insight: 'Unshakable is the deliverance of my mind, this is my last birth, and, now, there is no existence again'."

AFTERMATH

Thus did the Exalted One expound, and the delighted Bhikkhus applauded the words of the Exalted One.

When the doctrine was being expounded, the dustless, stainless, Truth-seeing eye arose in Venerable Koṇḍañña, and he saw that "whatever is subject to origination is also subject to cessation."

When the Buddha expounded the discourse of the Dhammacakka, the earth-bound deities exclaimed: "This excellent Dhammacakka, which could not be expounded by any ascetic, priest, god, māra, or brahmā in this world, has been expounded by the Exalted One in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares."

Hearing this, the devas of Cātummahārājika, Tāvatiṁsā, Yāmā, Tusitā, Nimmānarati, Paranimmitavasavatti, and the brahmās of Brahmā Pārisajja, Brahmā Purohita, Mahā Brahmā, Parittābhā, Appamāṇābhā, Ābhassarā, Parittasubhā, Appamāṇasubhā, Subhakiṇṇā, Vehapphalā, Avihā, Atappā, Sudassā, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭhā, also raised the same joyous cry.

Thus, at that very moment, at that very instant, this cry extended as far as the brahma-realm. These ten thousand world systems quaked, tottered, and trembled violently.

A radiant light, surpassing the effulgence of the gods, appeared in the world. Then, the Exalted One said: "Friends, Koṇḍañña has indeed understood. Friends, Koṇḍañña has indeed understood."

Therefore, Venerable Koṇḍañña was named Aññāta Koṇḍañña.[477]

"Thus Have I Heard"

Every discourse in the *Sutta Piṭaka* is introduced with the words "Thus have I heard." These were the introductory words that Venerable Ānanda uttered when questioned by Venerable Mahākassapa at the First Council, which was convened three months after the *Buddha* passed away. It was at this convocation of the *Sangha* that the *Buddha's* Teachings were first compiled together to be recited and committed to memory. Venerable Ānanda was the first cousin of the *Buddha* and His personal attendant for twenty-five years. For the first twenty years after His Enlightenment, the *Buddha* had no permanent attendant. This raises the question of how Ānanda heard those discourses that the *Buddha* delivered over the first twenty years of His teaching.

[477] This discourse is repeated in full from Chapter 6. Cf. *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Sacca Saṁyutta (Connected Discourses on the Truths). For an excellent presentation of the Four Noble Truths, cf. Rewata Dhamma, *The First Discourse of the Buddha* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1997]). The majority of this chapter is adapted from this book.

When the *Buddha* asked Venerable Ānanda to become His attendant, Ānanda replied that he would accept the position only if the Blessed One agreed to the following eight conditions:

1. The *Buddha* should not give him robes which He Himself had received.
2. The *Buddha* should not give him food which He had received.
3. The *Buddha* should not allow him to dwell in the same Fragrant Chamber.
4. The *Buddha* should not take him with Him wherever the *Buddha* is invited.
5. The *Buddha* should kindly go with him wherever he is invited.
6. The *Buddha* should kindly give him permission to introduce visitors who came from afar to see the *Buddha*.
7. The *Buddha* should kindly grant him permission to approach Him whenever any doubt should arise.
8. The *Buddha* should kindly repeat to him any discourses that were spoken in his absence.

The *Buddha* accepted these conditions before Venerable Ānanda agreed to be His attendant. According to the first four conditions, Ānanda did not want any material benefit from his relationship to the *Buddha*. The last condition is very important with respect to the words "Thus have I heard," because the *Buddha* always repeated to Ānanda any discourse delivered in his absence. Therefore, Venerable Ānanda, who was noted for his exceptional memory, knew all of the discourses and Teachings delivered by the *Buddha* during His forty-five years of teaching. After the passing away of the *Buddha*, the chief disciple, Venerable Mahākassapa, decided to hold a council for the future safety and purity of the *Buddha's* Teachings. He asked Venerable Ānanda: "Friend, Ānanda, when was the wheel of *Dhamma* delivered? By whom was it delivered and on whose account? And how was it delivered?" Then, Venerable Ānanda answered: "Venerable Mahākassapa, thus have I heard: At one time, the Blessed One was staying at the Deer Park, in Isipatana near Benares. Then, the *Buddha* addressed the five ascetics …"

As in the other *suttas*, there is no definite date attached to this discourse. Precise chronological data as to the year and the month in which each discourse was delivered would have been very helpful. But chronological data would have been an encumbrance to committing the discourses to memory and to their recitation. Nevertheless, it is generally believed that the *Buddha* taught this particular discourse on the full-moon day of July, two months after His Enlightenment.

The Five Ascetics

At the time of His Enlightenment, the five ascetics who had been His companions during the six years that He struggled to attain Liberation were staying in the Deer Park at Isipatana. When the Ascetic Gotama changed His method of practice from austerities to the Middle Path, the five ascetics abandoned Him, believing that He had given up His

quest. After His Enlightenment, the *Buddha* sought them out. When they saw the *Buddha* approaching, they decided not to pay Him due respect, inasmuch as they had misconstrued His discontinuance of rigid ascetic practices. They made an agreement, saying:

> *"Friends, that Ascetic Gotama is coming. He is luxurious. He has given up striving and has turned to a life of abundance. He should not be greeted and waited upon. His bowl and robe should not be taken. Nevertheless, a seat should be prepared. If He wishes, let Him sit down."*

However, as the *Buddha* drew near, His august personality was such that they were compelled to receive Him with due honor. One came forward and took His bowl and robe, another prepared a seat, and yet another brought water for His feet. Nevertheless, they still addressed Him as "friend (*āvuso*) Gotama," a form of address applied generally to juniors and equals.

Then, the *Buddha* said to them:

> *"Do not, O Bhikkhus, address the Tathāgata by name or by the title 'āvuso.' An Exalted One, O Bhikkhus, is the Tathāgata. A Fully Enlightened One is He. Listen carefully, O Bhikkhus! Deathlessness has been attained. I shall instruct and teach the Dhamma. If you act according to my instructions, before long, you will realize, by your own intuitive wisdom, and live, attaining in this life itself, that supreme consummation of the Holy Life, for the sake of which sons of noble families rightly leave the household life for homelessness."*

Thereupon, the five ascetics replied:

> *"By that demeanor of yours, āvuso Gotama, by that discipline, by those painful austerities, you did not attain to any superhuman specific knowledge and insight worthy of a Noble One. How is it that you could gain any such superhuman specific knowledge and insight worthy of a Noble One when you have become luxurious and have turned to a life of abundance?"*

In explanation, the *Buddha* answered:

> *"The Tathāgata, O Bhikkhus, is not luxurious, has not given up striving, and has not turned to a life of abundance. The Tathāgata is an Exalted One. He is a Fully Enlightened One. Listen carefully, O Bhikkhus! Deathlessness has been attained. I shall instruct and teach the Dhamma. If you act according to my instructions, before long, you will realize, by your own intuitive wisdom, and live, attaining in this life itself, that supreme consummation of the Holy Life for the sake of which sons of noble families rightly leave the household life for homelessness."*

For a second time, the close-minded ascetics expressed their disappointment in the same manner. For a second time, the *Buddha* reassured them of His attainment of Enlightenment. When the adamant ascetics expressed their refusal to believe Him for a third time, the *Buddha* questioned them thus: "Do you know, O *Bhikkhus*, when I ever spoke to you in this way before?" "Nay, indeed, Lord," they replied.

The *Buddha* then repeated, once again, that He had gained Enlightenment and that they also could realize the Truth if they would act according to His instructions. At that point, they were convinced and sat in silence to listen.

Avoiding the Two Extremes

Because it was commonly believed at the time that happiness or Ultimate Truth could only be achieved through extreme asceticism and self-mortification, the Ascetic Gotama had also practiced various forms of austerities for six years before realizing their futility. His companions, the five ascetics, firmly believed that, without strict asceticism, Liberation was not possible. Therefore, when the *Buddha* met with them in the Deer Park at Isipatana after His Enlightenment, He intentionally began His discourse by elaborating on the two extremes that needed to be avoided.

The first extreme is the indulgence in desirable sense objects — desirable sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and objects of touch. Taking delight in such objects of pleasure and enjoying them physically and mentally inclines one to pursue these sensory pleasures. The *Buddha* experienced this extreme as a Prince before renouncing worldly life. The other extreme, involving attempts to inflict self-mortification on oneself, can only result in suffering. Rejecting food and clothing, which one is normally accustomed to, is a form of self-torture and is unprofitable. The renunciation of worldly life does not necessarily mean an outright denial of all life's supports.

Delight in sensory pleasures and relishing them is to be regarded as a vulgar practice. Such enjoyments lead to the formation of base desires, which are clinging and lustful, and tend to develop conceit and avarice. Out of avarice, one who enjoys sense objects comes to believe that no one else has the right to enjoy such pleasures and does not wish to share his or her good fortune with others, or else is overcome with thoughts of jealousy. Indulgence in sensory pleasures does not suit those who have gone forth from the worldly life. This kind of living is the concern of society, which condones sensory pleasures as the highest form of happiness — the greater the pleasure, the greater the happiness, or so they think. Paradoxically, greed, insecurity, intolerance, ill will and hatred, violence, war, and the like are the end results of such an attitude.

The *Buddha* taught that indulgence in sensory pleasures is not the practice of enlightened, Noble Ones (*Ariyas*). Noble Ones who live the worldly life have abandoned attachment to sense objects. For example, in the first stage of Sainthood, the *Sotāpanna*, or Stream-Winner, has not yet entirely overcome lust and passions. Incipient perceptions of the agreeableness of sensory pleasures (*sukhasaññā*) still linger. Nevertheless, the *Sotāpanna* will not feel compelled to indulge in worldly pleasures.

Indulgence in sensory pleasures does not lead to one's own welfare or well-being. In general, accumulating wealth, establishing a family life, striving for success and prosperity in this world are considered by society to mean that one is working for one's advancement, for one's welfare. But, in reality, such views are misguided — attaining such worldly success and prosperity does not lead to one's ultimate well-being. Striving for one's welfare in such a manner may actually condition greater or lesser well-being in the cycle of rebirths in *saṁsāra*. This is not the way to overcome old age, illness, and death, nor to free oneself from all forms of suffering. In order to eradicate suffering, one must practice morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), to which the pursuit of sensory pleasures proves a hindrance.

WORLDLINGS AND SENSORY PLEASURES: The discourse on the Four Noble Truths says specifically that one who has gone forth from the worldly life — one who has "renounced the world" — should not indulge in sensory pleasures. The question therefore arises whether ordinary worldlings may freely enjoy sensory pleasures. Since the gratification of sense desires is a preoccupation of society, the *Buddha* emphasized the Middle Path. When one lives among worldly surroundings, one can partake of sensory pleasures with wisdom; but one should try to avoid habits that lead to or reinforce craving. Householders who are serious about their practice should try to rein in and diminish their desires and conscientiously observe the Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*), especially the third precept about abstaining from the misuse of one's sexual desires.

Devotion to self-mortification is the opposite of sensory indulgence. It is a form of self-torture practiced under the mistaken belief that luxurious living causes attachment to sensory pleasures and that only extreme austerity can lead to eternal peace. Some of the practices performed by ascetics include: denial of food and clothing; immersion in frigid water during cold weather; and, in hot weather, exposure to the sun or standing near burning fires. Some ascetics do not use beds but, instead, rest naked on the ground. Some resort to lying on prickly thorns covered only by a sheet. Others remain in a sitting posture for days, or keep standing only, neither lying nor sitting down. Some completely cut off food and water. There are some who eat on alternate days only, while others eat once in two or three days. Some even abstain from food and water for fifteen days on end. Some reduce their meal to just one handful of food, while others live on nothing but green vegetables and grass or even cow excrement. The *Buddha* also practiced many of these austerities during His six-year struggle before discovering the Middle Path.

The practice of self-mortification was regarded by naked ascetics in ancient India as being a holy pursuit. Some naked ascetics at the time of the *Buddha* believed that they had to experience physical suffering due to their previous unwholesome actions. Thus, they practiced self-mortification in order to exhaust the accumulated *kamma* resulting from unwholesome actions of past experiences. When the *Buddha* asked them if they knew how many unwholesome acts they had committed in previous existences, they were unable to answer. The *Buddha*, knowing that, as long as they adhered to this belief, they would not be receptive to the Noble Eightfold Path, then explained to them that it was

unworthy and fruitless to practice self-mortification, neither knowing if misdeeds had been committed, nor how many of them had been expiated.

Throughout ancient India, this kind of practice was widely respected as a noble undertaking long before the *Buddha's* Enlightenment. It was universally held that only self-mortification could lead to higher knowledge, and the group of five ascetics also held strongly to this belief. Therefore, the *Buddha* began His first discourse denouncing self-mortification as too rigid. Only subsequently did He expound the doctrine of the Noble Eightfold Path.

ARDUOUS EFFORT: There were some teachers at the time whose interpretation of self-mortification contradicted the Teaching of the *Buddha*. According to them, the earnest, tireless effort required for meditation amounted to a kind of self-mortification. The *Buddha* disagreed. He taught that strenuous, unrelenting exertion and strong determination were required to attain the level of concentration needed for insight and, from there, Liberation. However, such strong determination only follows rigorous practice and effort. Beginners are not expected to have such a high level of determination immediately. They are expected, however, to make a sincere commitment to develop the threefold training (*sikkhā*) — morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). As practice deepens, so will determination; as determination deepens, so will practice. Any practitioner who is not concerned with developing morality, concentration, and wisdom but who believes instead that self-mortification itself leads to *nibbāna* is on the wrong path. Alternatively, arduous effort, no matter how painful and distressing, if undertaken for the development of morality, concentration, and wisdom, does not constitute self-mortification. Moreover, Buddhist monks and nuns are expected to live a life of renunciation. Bound by a strict set of rules and regulations designed to provide a supportive environment, they are expected to devote all of their time and energy to spiritual development.

The *Buddha* Himself, after avoiding the two extremes and by following the Noble Eightfold Path, attained Buddhahood and gained Enlightenment.

Vision and Knowledge

> *"Abandoning both these extremes, the Tathāgata has comprehended the Middle Path, which promotes seeing and knowledge and which tends to peace, higher wisdom, enlightenment, and nibbāna."*

With these words, the *Buddha* informed the group of five ascetics that, after relinquishing the two extremes of indulgence in sensory pleasures and self-mortification, He discovered the Middle Path (*majjhima-paṭipadā*), by means of which He attained Enlightenment. The *Buddha's* resumption of taking food after fruitless years of austerity practice enabled Him to engage in meditation on mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*) — an integral part of the Middle Path. Inasmuch as the food was taken in moderation

and in a mindful manner, it was not regarded as enjoyment of sensory pleasure, nor was it self-mortification.

One who has practiced mindfulness meditation will not indulge in these two extremes. He or she will enjoy sense objects with mindfulness — this is an example of the Middle Way without craving. Thus, there will be no indulgence in these two extremes. Furthermore, the necessary material requisites such as food, clothing, shelter, and medicine should be used with reflective contemplation. Whenever sense objects come into contact with mind and body, one should be aware of them as they are. Each and every moment should be noted, and one should be aware of sense objects objectively. Because of noting and objective awareness, no craving or aversion can arise. If one avoids the two extremes, one is following the Middle Path.

Whenever sense objects come into contact with the sense doors, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching arise at the sense bases (*āyatana*) as the respective sense consciousnesses. At that time, one should develop awareness in each precise moment until one realizes that objects arise and pass away and do not remain for even two consecutive moments. If, at the moment of contact with one of the sense objects, greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), or delusion (*moha*) arises, these are also observed as transient objects of awareness. This realization is called "insight" (*vipassanā*), or "understanding things as they really are." By cultivating this understanding, one comes to have a different relationship with food, clothing, and other sense objects. One will tend not to indulge in these for the purpose of mere sensory stimulation and enjoyment. Instead, the awareness of every object appearing at the sense doors will be recognized and understood according to its true nature — as impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and insubstantial, that is, devoid of self (*anattā*). Then, vision will arise and the wisdom-eye (*paññā-cakkhu*) will open, leading to the realization of *nibbāna*. When the Noble Eightfold Path (*aṭṭhangika magga*) is developed, the true nature of mind and matter becomes discernable. The fact of their constantly arising becomes evident, as does the recognition that all these mental and material phenomena are subject to impermanence, suffering, and lack of self-being. In the final stage of the cultivation of the Noble Eightfold Path, the nature of *nibbāna* is clearly and fully realized for oneself.

LEADING TO CALMNESS: The Noble Eightfold Path leads to the calming of mental defilements (*kilesa*). For one who develops the Middle Path through mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), mental defilements become reduced and calmed. However, only when one has mastered the practice can mental defilements be gradually eradicated, according to the stage of insight one has attained.

Indulgence in sensory pleasures or in self-mortification does not lead to the calming of defilements, but, instead, excites more and more of these defilements. Once one has given in to the temptation of sensory enjoyment, the craving for repeated sensory gratification (*kāmacchanda*) results. Coming into contact with one pleasing sensory object leads to the desire to possess more and more. One craving brings more and more cravings. There is no end to it.

Similarly, the practice of self-mortification does not lead to calmness. One's vitality is lowered as a result of extreme austerity, and this keeps the mental defilements temporarily in check. As when one is seriously ill or suffering from painful diseases, physical strength is at a low ebb, and defilements remain temporarily dormant. Once normal health and strength are regained, desires for gratification of the senses make their appearance as usual. While self-mortification is being practiced, gross defilements remain suppressed, but subtle defilements continue to arise. For example, the defilement of wrong view of self, conceit, and even wrong belief in how to practice may still have occasion to arise.

HIGHER KNOWLEDGE: The Middle Path also leads to higher knowledge (*abhiññā*). The wisdom that realizes the Four Noble Truths is, in this context, called the "higher knowledge." When one develops insight and practices the Middle Path, one understands and realizes, through one's own experience, the nature of the mental and physical world as impermanent, suffering, and devoid of self. One sees that all the aggregates of clinging are *dukkha*, the suffering that one experiences as a being, an "I," or a self. Due to this profound penetration into the true nature of the mental and material world, there occurs in the practitioner a sense of detachment toward all cravings and the realization that craving (*taṇhā*) itself is the origin of *dukkha*. If one comprehends the Noble Truth of *dukkha* by observing any of the five aggregates of clinging (*khandha*), there will simultaneously arise the realization of the three remaining truths as well. This is called "knowing the Four Noble Truths by means of insight, or *vipassanā*." As *vipassanā* insight gains full maturity, *nibbāna* is realized, and the factors of the Middle Path become the Noble Path, in that the Four Noble Truths are known as they should be known by means of the Noble Eightfold Path. Therefore, it is said that the Middle Path gives rise to higher knowledge.

ENLIGHTENMENT: The Middle Path leads to Enlightenment (*sambodha* or *sambodhi*) through penetrative insight (*vipassanā*). In Pāḷi, there is no distinction between higher knowledge (*abhiññā*) and Enlightenment (*sambodha*). However, *abhiññā* denotes *vipassanā* insight and the Noble Path insight (*ariyamaggañāṇa*), which have not yet been developed (knowledge of the path of the enlightened or Noble Ones, of which there are four stages: Stream-Winner [*Sotāpanna*], Once-Returner [*Sakadāgāmī*], Non-Returner [*Anāgāmī*], and *Arahant*). *Sambodha* means penetrative insight through which one sees the Four Noble Truths clearly. One who has never observed mental and material objects moment to moment cannot see things clearly, because ignorance (*avijjā*) obscures them. But, when the Noble Path is developed and ignorance has been uprooted, one can see or realize things (mental and material phenomena) as they really are. This understanding, or wisdom, is called Enlightenment, the realization of the Four Noble Truths.

NIBBĀNA: The Middle Path ultimately leads to the attainment of *nibbāna*. For one who penetrates the Four Noble Truths with *Arahant* path insight and also realizes *nibbāna* with *Arahant* fruit (*phala*) insight, it is the attainment of the end of suffering

(*dukkha*). *Nibbāna* is the final goal of those who want to be free from all forms of worldly sufferings. Therefore, it was mentioned as a separate attainment by the *Buddha*. If the Noble Eightfold Path is developed, the Four Noble Truths will be penetrated, and *nibbāna* realized by *Arahant* path and fruit. When the *Arahant* passes away, it is called attainment of *parinibbāna*, or final Liberation. At that moment, all physical and mental phenomena cease, and no further existence in the cycle of rebirth (*saṁsāra*) becomes possible. This is the cessation of all suffering.

Thus, one who is not involved in either sensory pleasures or self-mortification and who practices the Middle Path that opens vision, develops knowledge, and calms mental defilements, produces higher knowledge and achieves Enlightenment, finally attaining the state of *nibbāna*.

The Essence of the Dhamma[478]

Following six years of unrelenting struggle, the *Buddha* realized the Four Noble Truths (*Ariya-Sacca*[479]). These Noble Truths are found in all beings as realities of the universe. In the Rohitassa Sutta,[480] the *Buddha* States:

> *"In this very fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and thoughts, do I proclaim the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world."*

In this particular context, the term "world" (*loka*) implies suffering (*dukkha*). This interesting passage refers to the Four Noble Truths, which the *Buddha* Himself discovered by His own intuitive knowledge. Whether *Buddhas* arise or not, these Truths exist, and it is a *Buddha* who reveals them to the deluded world. They do not and cannot change with time because they are eternal Truths. The *Buddha* was not indebted to anyone for His realization of these Truths. He Himself said: "They were unheard

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[478] This and the following sections are adapted, in part, from a radio lecture given in Colombo, Śri Lanka, in 1933 by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera entitled "The Essence of Buddhism" and published as part of *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures* (= The Wheel Publication no. 394/396) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1994]), pp. 1—13, and, in part, from Rewata Dhamma, *The First Discourse of the Buddha* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1997]), pp. 55—70. Some material has also been taken from Stephen Batchelor, *Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books [1997]).

[479] *Sacca* "Truth" is that which is. Its Sanskrit equivalent is *satya*, which means an incontrovertible fact. According to Buddhism, there are two types of Truth: (1) *paramattha-sacca*, or Ultimate Truth, and (2) *vohāra-sacca*, or Conventional Truth. In explaining His doctrine, the *Buddha* sometimes used conventional language, while, at other times, He used philosophical language that is in accordance with undeluded insight into reality.

[480] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*; *Anguttara Nikāya*.

before."[481] The *Buddha* taught the Four Noble Truths to the five ascetics in His first discourse in the Deer Park at Isipatana.

In Pāḷi, these Truths are termed *ariya-saccāni* "Noble Truths." They are so called because they were discovered by the greatest *Ariya* (Noble One), the *Buddha*, who was far removed from all mental defilements (*kilesa*).

The *Dhamma*, or universal moral law discovered by the *Buddha*, is summed up in Four Noble Truths: the Truth about the universal sway of suffering (*dukkha*), about its origin (*samudaya*), its cessation (*nirodha*), and the path (*magga*) leading to its cessation.

1. The first Truth, about the universality of Suffering, teaches, in short, that all forms of existence are uncertain, transient, contingent, and devoid of intrinsic self-identity and are, therefore, by their very nature, subject to suffering.

2 The second Truth, about the Origin of Suffering, teaches that all suffering is rooted in selfish craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). It further explains the cause of this seeming injustice in nature by teaching that nothing in the world can come into existence without a reason or a cause and that, not only all our latent tendencies, but our whole destiny, all weal and woe, results from causes that can be traced partly in this life and partly in former states of existence.

The second Truth further teaches us that the future life, with all its weal and woe, must result from the seeds sown in this life and in former lives.

3. The third Truth, or the Truth about the Cessation of Suffering, shows how, through the abandoning of craving and ignorance, all suffering will vanish and Liberation from *saṁsāra* will be attained.

4. The fourth Truth shows the way, or the means, by which this goal is to be reached. It is the Noble Eightfold Path of Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

Each Truth requires that it be acted upon in its own particular way — *understanding* suffering (anguish, unsatisfactoriness), *letting go* of its origin, *realizing* its cessation, and *cultivating* the path. In describing to the five ascetics what His awakening meant, the *Buddha* spoke of having discovered complete freedom of heart and mind from the compulsions of craving. He called such freedom the taste of *Dhamma*.

[481] Hence, there is no justification for the statement that Buddhism is a natural outgrowth of Hinduism, although it has to be admitted that there exist some fundamental doctrines common to both — that is because those doctrines are in agreement with eternal Truth or *Dhamma*.

The First Noble Truth

> *"Now this, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to Suffering: Birth [earthly existence], indeed, is suffering; old age is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; likewise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. To be conjoined with what one dislikes is suffering, to be separated from what one likes is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging are suffering."*

"*Dukkha*" is a Pāḷi term that cannot be adequately translated into English. There seems to be no satisfactory equivalent in any other language either. In ordinary usage, the word *dukkha* means "suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness, ill, sorrow, misery," but there are further nuances. The word *dukkha*, as it appears in the First Noble Truth, represents the broadest frame of the *Buddha's* perspective of life and the world. It means not only ordinary suffering but also includes the deeper meaning of impermanence, imperfection, emptiness, and insubstantiality. As a feeling, *dukkha* means that which is difficult to be endured. As an abstract truth, *dukkha* is used in the sense of "contemptible" and "emptiness." The world rests on suffering — hence, it is contemptible. The world is devoid of any intrinsic reality — hence, it is empty or void. *Dukkha* can, therefore, be taken to mean "contemptible void."

Average men only see the surface. A Noble One (*Ariya*) sees things as they truly are. To an *Ariya*, all life is, by nature, suffering, and he finds no real happiness in this world, which deceives mankind with illusory pleasures. Material happiness is merely the gratification of some desire. "No sooner is the desired thing gained than it begins to be scorned." Insatiate are all desires.

All are subject to birth (*jāti*), and, consequently, to decay (*jarā*), disease (*vyādhi*), and, finally, to death (*maraṇa*). No one is exempt from these four inevitable causes of suffering.

Not getting what one wants is also suffering. We do not wish to be conjoined with things or persons we dislike, nor do we wish to be separated from things or persons we like. Our cherished desires are not, however, always gratified. What we least expect or what we least desire is often thrust upon us. At times, such unexpected unpleasant circumstances become so intolerable and painful that some people are driven to commit suicide, as if such an act would solve their problems.

Real happiness is found within and is not defined in terms of wealth, power, honors, or conquests. If such worldly possessions are forcibly or unjustly obtained, or are misdirected, or even viewed with attachment, they will be a source of pain and sorrow for the possessors.

Ordinarily, the enjoyment of sensory pleasures is the highest and only happiness to an average person. There is, no doubt, a momentary happiness in the anticipation, gratification, and recollection of such fleeting material pleasures, but they are illusory and temporary. According to the *Buddha*, non-attachment (*virāgatā*), or the transcending of material pleasures, is a greater happiness.

In brief, this composite body itself is a cause of suffering.

This First Truth of suffering, which depends upon this so-called "being" and various aspects of life, is to be carefully analyzed and examined. This examination leads to a proper understanding of oneself as one really is.

THE THREE ASPECTS OF SUFFERING: There are three aspects of *dukkha*: (1) *dukkha dukkha*, which is ordinary suffering; (2) *vipariṇāma dukkha*, which is suffering experienced by change; and (3) *saṁkhāra dukkha*, which is suffering experienced by conditioned states.

The first aspect, *dukkha dukkha*, contains two components of ordinary suffering. The first refers to life, or being, as it is constituted by mental and material forces (*nāma-rūpa*), which are known more specifically as the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). The *Buddha* defined these five aggregates as *dukkha*. In other words, the bare fact of life itself is *dukkha*. The second refers to universal maladies. When mental and material forces — the five aggregates — manifest or come into existence, they are bound to be experienced as all kinds of suffering. This is the *dukkha* experienced in birth, sickness, old age, death, association with unloved ones and unpleasant conditions, not getting what one wants, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. In short, *dukkha dukkha* is all kinds of physical and mental suffering that are universally accepted as suffering or pain.

The second aspect of suffering is *vipariṇāma dukkha*. *Vipariṇāma* means "change." It is the nature of this universe that all things constantly change — they are impermanent by nature. Thus, a happy feeling or a happy condition cannot last. When they change, suffering, pain, or unpleasant feelings are the result. "Whatever is impermanent is suffering," said the *Buddha*. Whenever one is faced with worldly vicissitudes, one experiences suffering in life. The first two aspects of suffering are easy to understand, since they are common experiences in daily life. Because these aspects of suffering are readily recognizable as general experiences, they have typically come to stand for the meaning of *dukkha* referred to in the First Noble Truth. However, this does not convey the full meaning of *dukkha* as the *Buddha* used the term when referring to the First Noble Truth.

The third aspect of suffering, *saṁkhāra dukkha*, is the suffering experienced by conditioned states. Everything in the universe, whether physical or mental, is conditioned as well as conditioning. This kind of *dukkha* will be clearly understood through direct experience in *vipassanā* meditation. One who practices *vipassanā* meditation needs to be constantly aware of mental and physical phenomena until he or she directly realizes the ever-changing processes that constitute the universe. Then one will understand *dukkha* as a consequence.

THE FIVE AGGREGATES:[482] All phenomenal things — that is, all things known to us by direct experience — exist only in momentary relationships; they are interdependent and have no real existence apart from their conditioned relativity. That is why the

[482] Also known as the five "groups of existence" or "groups of clinging" (*upādānakkhandha*).

Buddha taught that all the physical and mental phenomena of this world are impermanent (*anicca*), subject to suffering (*dukkha*), and devoid of self-existence (*anattā*). Neither mind nor body is a "self-existing" entity. They are phenomena that arise conditioned by preceding and co-existing phenomena, and they subside and pass away when the natural causes producing them cease to take effect and then give place to others. Thus, the entire universe of animate and inanimate matter, of living beings and the vast galaxies of stars we see in the sky at night, is not a permanent self-existing structure but, rather, a process of continual change and transformation.

The material universe is seen as a dynamic web of interrelated events. None of the properties of any part of this web are fundamental; they all follow from the properties of the other parts, and the overall consistency of their interrelations determines the structure of the entire web.[483] Reality is an unbroken, coherent whole that is involved in an unending process of change. Within this perspective, all stable structures in the universe are nothing but abstractions. We might invest all kinds of effort in describing objects, entities, or events, but we must ultimately concede that they are all derived from an indefinable and unknowable whole. In this world, everything is in flux, always moving.

What is normally called a living being is seen in Buddhism as nothing but a combination and continuous arising and dissolution of mental and physical phenomena. The personality and the apparent continuity of a person is nothing other than the ceaseless activity of a stream of *dhammas* held together as a temporary unity by the force of habitual patterns.

> *"When all constituent parts are there, the designation 'cart' is used. Just so, where the five aggregates exist, we speak of a 'living being'."*[484]

Thus, there is no enduring "soul" (*attā*) or any entity of that kind. That which leads to rebirth is simply volitional mental impulses of the past motivated by craving (*taṇhā*). Individual personality exists only as an aggregate of tendencies — the so-called "habit-formations" of modern psychology —, and even these are subject to continual change. A living being, or an individual, is merely a combination of ever-changing physical and mental forces or energies, which can be divided into five groups or aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*). The five aggregates are:

1. Matter (*rūpa*);
2. Feeling (*vedanā*), or sensation — the bare feeling based on contact;
3. Perceptions (*saññā*) — the tendency to recognize an object;
4. Predisposing mental formations (*saṁkhāra*) — the subsequent emotion based on an appraisal of the meaning of a feeling;
5. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

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[483] Cf. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [25th anniversary edition, 2000]), p. 286.
[484] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

Let us now look at each of these aggregates in detail:[485]

1. The first aggregate is that of matter (*rūpakkhandha*): Mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*) are both impermanent and unstable. Everything that exists is composed of *kalāpas* (subatomic particles), each arising and dying out simultaneously. Each *kalāpa* is a mass formed by the combination of the eight nature-elements (*dhātu*). The first four are the so-called four "great essentials" (*mahābhūta*), the principle elements which are the essential material qualities that are predominant in a *kalāpa*; they are: (1) the element of earth (*paṭhavī-dhātu*), which is the quality of heaviness and lightness in material form; (2) the element of water (*āpo-dhātu*), which is the quality of cohesion, or fluidity; (3) the element of fire, or heat (*tejo-dhātu*), which is the quality of hot and cold; and (4) the element of air (*vāyo-dhātu*), which is the quality of motion, or movement, in the material elements. The remaining four elements are merely subsidiaries that are dependent on and derived from the first four. They are: (1) color; (2) smell; (3) taste; and (4) nutritive essence. It is only when the eight nature-elements are combined together that the entity of a *kalāpa* is formed. In other words, during the very brief moment of the co-existence of these eight nature-elements, there is an entity that is known as a *kalāpa*. These *kalāpas* are in a state of perpetual change or flux (*anicca*, or impermanence) — they are nothing but a stream of energy. The body, as we call it, is not an entity as it seems to be but a continuum of matter with a co-existing life force.

   Also included are the five material sense organs, that is, the faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body plus their corresponding objects in the external world — visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangible objects. Thus, the whole world of matter, both internal and external, is included in the aggregate of matter (*rūpa*).

   Rūpa is the only *khandha* that corresponds to the external physical world. The remaining four *khandhas* correspond to the mental side of the mind/body system. The physical-material world is known as data presented to the senses. However, in this case, not only are the sense objects themselves included, but also the senses. This reflects the fact that, if we do not forget the role of our own psychophysical organism in the role of perception, then, we find that what appears to the mind at a moment of perception of an object of sight is that object together with the sense of seeing, and so on for the other senses. We never merely see an object, we always experience seeing that object at the same time.

2. The second aggregate is that of feelings (*vedanākkhandha*), or sensations. All kinds of feelings (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral), experienced through the contact of physical and mental organs with the external world, are included in the second aggregate. There are six kinds of feelings: the contact of the eye with visible forms,

[485] For details, cf. Jeremy Hayward, *Shifting Worlds, Changing Minds: Where the Sciences and Buddhism Meet* (Boston, MA, and London: Shambhala [1987]) and Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 98—102.

ear with sounds, nose with smells, tongue with taste, body with tangible objects, and mind with mental objects (images, thoughts, or ideas). Feeling is the automatic affective response to an object before any higher conceptual process enters in, a bare reaction of "pleasant," "unpleasant," or "neutral." This does not refer to a distinct emotional response but to a simple positive, negative, or neutral evaluation that accompanies cognition of any primary form. While *rūpa* corresponds to the physical-material pole of dualistic experience, and *khandhas* three through five correspond to the mental pole, the second *khandha* connects the physical and the mental. In "body," it manifests as the inner feeling of the body as pleasurable, painful, or neutral. In "mind," it manifests as affective arousal, the instinctive response to the basic "thingness" of the outside and the basic responses of "like" or "dislike."

3. The third aggregate is that of perceptions (*saññākkhandha*). Perceptions arise in dependence on feelings (*vedanā*). Like feelings, perceptions are of six kinds, in relation to six internal faculties and six external objects — they are produced through the contact of our six faculties with the external world. It is perceptions that recognize objects, whether physical or mental. Perception is the first discernment that there is a specific object — the beginning of concept formation. Perceptions help form various concepts, including the concept of self. It abstracts the characteristics of any object that has been determined by feeling to be of interest, thus enabling one to name it. Because one can name it, one can also grasp onto it and hold it in one's field of attention, that is, in one's "world."

4. The fourth aggregate is that of predisposing mental formations (*saṁkhārakkhandha*), or, simply, mental formations. All volitional, or mental activities, both good and bad, are included in this aggregate. Feelings and perceptions are not volitional actions — they do not produce karmic effects. It is only volitional actions that can produce karmic effects. Predisposing mental formations (*saṁkhāra*) comprise all mental elements other than feeling and perception. This *khandha* comprises the conceptual contents of experience. A variety of positive, negative, and indifferent emotions; simple and complex thought patterns as well as systems of thought such as various philosophical, religious, and psychological belief systems; and various mental functions and attitudes are all included in this category.

5. The fifth aggregate is that of consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*). Consciousness is a reaction, awareness, or response that arises at one of the six sense bases (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind). Consciousness does not recognize an object. It is only a sort of awareness — awareness of the presence of an object. It is the third aggregate (*saññā*, or perceptions) that recognizes an object. It must be noted that what consciousness infers about what it is experiencing may be quite different from what the organism as a whole is experiencing. That is not to say that consciousness is not experiencing what it seems to be experiencing. That is necessarily true, since

consciousness is consciousness of just what seems, and nothing else. But it is saying that the conclusions consciousness jumps to may be wrong.

The five *khandhas* together comprise all the psychophysical constituents of the human personality. There is nothing left out that can actually be noted in our experience; the five *khandhas* constitute all that we call "I" and "the world." The idea of a "self" affects perception at unconscious levels and distorts it so that our view of "what is" is constantly colored by this idea, and is, therefore, constantly deceived. In the Buddhist view, understanding this fact, not just at the surface rational level, which is superficial and deceptive, but at the deep subconscious levels of perceptual processing, is the necessary step to awakening out of this self-deception in order to perceive things as they truly are.

Thus, Buddhism does not totally deny the existence of a personality in the conventional sense. It denies, in the ultimate sense (*paramattha saccena*), an identical being, or a permanent entity, but it does not deny a continuity in process. The Buddhist philosophical term for an individual is *santati*, that is, a "flux," or "continuity." This uninterrupted flux, or continuity, of psychophysical phenomena, conditioned by *kamma*, having no perceptible source in the beginningless past nor any end to its continuation in the future, except by means of the Noble Eightfold Path, is the Buddhist substitute for the permanent ego, or eternal soul, found in other religious systems.

In Right Contemplation, the practitioner makes an analytical study of the nature of matter first, then of the nature of mind and of mental properties. He begins to see that mind and matter are in constant change — they are impermanent and fleeting. As his power of concentration increases, the true nature of the forces within him become more and more vivid.

The Second Noble Truth

> *"And again, O Bhikkhus, this is the Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering: It is that craving, associated with enjoyment and desire and seeking pleasure everywhere, which produces separate existence and leads to future births, and which keeps lingering on and on, that is the cause of suffering. In other words, it is craving for sense-pleasure, the desire for birth in a world of separateness, and the desire for existence to end."*

The *Buddha* explained how life is not different from *dukkha*. He taught that all suffering is rooted in selfish craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). There is no arbitrary creator who controls our destinies. Suffering (*dukkha*) and the cause of suffering (*dukkha samudaya*) are not attributable to any external agency, but can be explained by life itself. Craving, a mental factor (*cetasika*), is the most powerful force, causing not only suffering in this very life, but also the perpetuation of existence. It builds and rebuilds the world over and over again. Life depends on the desire for life. However, craving is not the first

or only cause for the arising of *dukkha*. Craving is itself conditioned by other causes. The most immediate cause of craving is *vedanā*, or feeling. According to Buddhism, there is no first cause. There are innumerable and beginningless causes and effects, which are interdependent and related to one another. Things are neither due to one single cause, nor are they causeless. Everything in the universe is conditioned, interdependent, and interrelated. Craving is regarded as the proximate cause of suffering. According to the *Abhidhamma*, the cause of the arising of suffering, or *dukkha samudaya*, is greed (*lobha*), one of the fifty-two mental factors. *Taṇhā* (which can also be translated as "thirst"), *rāga* (lust), and *upādāna* (attachment) are closely related to greed. *Lobha* conditions and causes the arising of *dukkha*, whereas *taṇhā* is the root cause of suffering (*taṇhā dukkhassa mūlaṁ*).

This craving (*taṇhā*) is a powerful mental force latent in all and is the chief cause of most of the ills of life. It is this craving, gross or subtle, that leads to repeated births in *saṁsāra* and makes one cling to all forms of life.

The grossest forms of craving are weakened on attaining *Sakadāgāmī*, the second stage of Sainthood, and are eradicated completely on attaining *Anāgāmī*, the third stage of Sainthood. The subtle forms of craving, on the other hand, are eradicated only upon attaining Arahantship.

Both suffering and craving can only be eradicated by following the Middle Way, enunciated by the *Buddha* Himself, and attaining the supreme bliss of *nibbāna*.

KAMMA AND REBIRTH:

> *"I have gone through many rounds of birth and death, seeking, but not finding, the builder of this house.*[486] *Sorrowful, indeed, is birth and death again and again!"*[487]

A "being" refers to the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) we call a "life." Life is *dukkha*, and *dukkha* is life. Craving (*taṇhā*) is one of the mental states of a "being." When one is born as a being, one has craving, or desire to be born again; and because of this desire, the being accumulates wholesome or unwholesome *kamma*. Therefore, on account of *kamma*, one is born again — has another becoming (*bhava*). In other words, desire produces rebirth. As stated in the *Visuddhimagga*:

> *Kamma's result proceeds from kamma,*
> *Result has kamma for its source,*
> *Future becoming springs from kamma,*
> *And this is how the world goes round.*

[486] The "house" is the body, the "house-builder" is craving. "Seeking, but not finding," means failing to attain Enlightenment.
[487] *Dhammapada*, XI, Old Age, verse 153.

It is easy to understand that, insofar as craving has the nature of delighting in and clinging to objects, a being finds delight in whatever existence it is born into and enjoys any sense objects present there. When one wishes to remain in existence and to get to enjoy pleasurable objects, then volitional activities come into play. These volitional actions (*kamma*), which may be wholesome (*kusala*) or unwholesome (*akusala*), are the cause of rebirth into new existences.

When a person is about to die, one of the wholesome or unwholesome *kammas* accumulated over the course of a person's lifetime appears at his or her sense doors. This sense object may be *kamma* or a sign of *kamma* (*kamma-nimitta*), that is, any sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, or idea that had been obtained at the time of that *kamma*. Alternatively, the object may be a sign of destiny (*gati-nimitta*), that is, the sign of the next existence where one is destined to take rebirth as the result of one's previous *kamma*. These arise with the process of consciousness for five moments before the death moment (*maraṇāsanna-javana*) and function as a new conditioning consciousness (*abhi-saṁkhāra viññāṇa*) for the rebirth.

According to the *Buddha*, *kamma* resembles a field in which consciousness may grow (*kammaṁ khettaṁ*). Consciousness is just like a seed (*viññāṇaṁ bijaṁ*) for the growth of the relinking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*), and craving is likened to the moisture or water element (*taṇhā sineho*), which is an essential factor for its growth. A new conditioning consciousness (*abhisaṁkhāra-viññāṇa*) that conditions new becoming takes as its object *kamma*, a sign of *kamma*, or a sign of destiny at the moment of dying. There are two causes for new life: (1) *kamma* and (2) *taṇhā*. But *kamma* without *taṇhā* cannot bring about new becoming. *Taṇhā* is the main cause. Therefore, it is said that *taṇhā* produces rebirth.

The consciousness that arises at the first moment of conception, known as "relinking consciousness," also takes as its object *kamma*, a sign of *kamma*, or a sign of destiny. The relinking consciousness is followed by the life continuum consciousness (*bhavanga citta*), which goes on continuously throughout life, even if there is no sense consciousness arising. According to the *Abhidhamma*, relinking consciousness, life continuum consciousness, and death consciousness within a single life are all in the same category. They arise as the result of one particular *kamma* in the past life that appeared at the moment of dying. Thus, *taṇhā* forms the root cause of the new existence or new becoming.

CRAVING FOR SENSORY PLEASURE: When we experience any kind of suffering or pain in this life, it is because of our craving for or attachment to sense objects. For instance, if our child is ill, we are worried and feel lots of suffering. But, if another person's child is ill, we do not worry or feel as much suffering, because we do not have so much attachment to someone else's child. Anything that we have attachment to or craving for, which changes or is lost, causes suffering. As the *Buddha* said:

> *"Craving*[488] *brings grief; craving brings fear. For those who are free from craving, there is neither grief nor fear."* [489]

Greed, desire, thirst, lust, yearning, and affection are some of the characteristics included in the term *taṇhā*. Craving is the enemy of the whole world; it is through craving that all unwholesome things come to living beings. Craving and attachment can arise for physical and non-physical things. Thus, we can have craving for and attachment to sense objects, wealth, or property as well as to rites and rituals, philosophy, views, ideas, or religion, all of which can lead to suffering, frustration, and unsatisfactoriness.

Now, where and how does this craving arise or take place? Where there is delight and attachment (*nandī-rāga sahagatā*), craving arises and manifests. All sixfold sense bases are the place at which craving arises, because it is through these bases that a person recognizes sense objects. When one sees an object, then, one reacts with liking or disliking. Likewise, when one hears sounds, smells odors, tastes flavors, touches tangible objects, or thinks, then liking or disliking arises. Some may say that there is no difficulty in accepting liking as craving, but how can one accept that disliking is craving, for it is aversion or hatred. On saying that, if one dislikes a particular thing, it means that one likes something else. That something else may be as simple as the desire to be free from the object one dislikes. Therefore, both liking and disliking are regarded as craving. Visual forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, and thoughts or ideas are delightful and pleasurable, and, when these objects arise at their respective sense organs, craving arises. The craving that arises with regard to sense objects is called *kāma-taṇhā*, or sensory craving.

DESIRE FOR BIRTH IN A WORLD OF SEPARATENESS: Craving associated with belief in eternal existence, is called "craving for existence, or becoming" (*bhava-taṇhā*). When sense objects arise, one develops craving as liking or disliking, and, according to one or the other, one accumulates wholesome or unwholesome *kamma* as a result of which one has to be reborn again. There are some people who believe in a future life and crave to be born again in a better life. Therefore, they attempt to accumulate good *kamma* so that they may be reborn into a better life. However, this is a form of *dukkha*, for "birth is also suffering" (*jāti pi dukkhā*). Craving for becoming, the desire to continue existing, or to continue to be reborn forever is what is known as the view of eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*).

DESIRE FOR EXISTENCE TO END: When craving is associated with the belief in self-annihilation, it is called "craving for non-existence" (*vibhava-taṇhā*). That is what is known as the view of annihilationism (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*). Believing that there are no

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[488] Here, "craving" (*taṅhā*) refers to selfish desire that arises at the six doors (*dvāra*); that is, craving for visible objects, for sounds, for smells, for tastes, for bodily impressions, and for mental impressions; in other words, it is craving for sensory stimulation. Craving is the source of suffering (*dukkha*) and of the ever-continuing cycle of rebirths (*saṁsāra*).

[489] *Dhammapada*, XVI, Pleasures, verse 216.

consequences to one's actions, the annihilationist may reject all moral principles, as well as the belief in life after death or future existences. Such a person may perform moral or immoral actions. But, irrespective of the rejection of the consequences, whether one believes in *kamma* or not, the result of *kamma* will be that one is reborn again into existence. To be born again is *dukkha*, regardless of whether the rebirth is happy or unhappy. Therefore, it is said that these three kinds of craving[490] are the origin, or root cause of suffering.

The Third Noble Truth

> *"And this, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering: It is the complete cessation, giving up, abandoning of craving; it is release and detachment from craving."*

The Third Noble Truth is the complete cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), which is *nibbāna*, which literally means "freedom from craving." While the literal meaning may help one understand the term, it cannot help one to experience the bliss of *nibbāna*. Only the one who applies the Noble Eightfold Path (*aṭṭhangika magga*) of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) can comprehend the full meaning of *nibbāna* through direct experience. It is impossible to make one understand with mere explanations or definitions. Just as the sweetness of mango fruit cannot be made known to one who has no previous experience of it until he puts a small piece on his tongue, so, too, must one "taste" *nibbāna*.

Nibbāna is the Ultimate Goal of Buddhists. Although many terms are used to describe it and many detailed explanations are provided, the actual understanding of *nibbāna* remains elusive to those who would only seek to comprehend it analytically and conceptually (*atakkāvacaro*). The *Buddha* defined *nibbāna* in both positive and negative terms. But, *nibbāna* is neither positive nor negative, for the idea of both negative and positive are relative and dualistic, whereas *nibbāna* is absolute reality and beyond duality and relativity. These terms cannot fully express the true meaning of *nibbāna*, which can only be realized through meditation and mental training. For those who delight in sensory pleasures, it is difficult to imagine what a blissful and sublime state might be like that is not characterized by any of the qualities experienced through the five sense doors.

Nevertheless, if *nibbāna* is described and defined in positive and negative terms, one may still get some notion about what *nibbāna* means in relative language. In this discourse, the *Buddha* used the word *dukkha-nirodha* (cessation of *dukkha*). Although the word *nibbāna* is not mentioned, these terms are synonymous. In positive terms, *nibbāna* means peace (*santi*), sublimity (*paṇīta*), purity (*suddhi*), release (*vimutti*), security (*khema*), excellent happiness (*paramasukha*), and so forth; while, in negative

[490] Namely, (1) craving for sense-pleasure, (2) desire for birth in a world of separateness (craving for existence), and (3) desire for existence to end (craving for annihilation).

terms, it is defined as deathless (*amataṁ*), unconditioned (*asankhata*), extinction of craving (*taṇhākkhayo*), extinction of hatred (*dosakkhayo*), extinction of delusion (*moha-kkhayo*), cessation of suffering (*nirodha*), extinction of thirst (*virāga*), and so on.

SOPĀDISESA NIBBĀNA: There are two kinds of *nibbāna*: (1) *sopādisesa-nibbāna*, meaning "*nibbāna* with the aggregates remaining," and (2) *anupādisesa-nibbāna*, meaning "*nibbāna* without the aggregates remaining." The meditator who practices *vipassanā* meditation attains stages of insight and subsequently enters the stream of the Noble Path. At that time, he or she realizes, for the first time, the bliss of *nibbāna*. During *vipassanā* meditation, the meditator realizes that the whole of mentality and materiality, which is held as "I," or a being, is impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and devoid of self (*anattā*). As the meditator's understanding and awareness matures to its culmination, awareness suddenly ceases. Then, he or she sees the other side of reality (the realization of the cessation of *dukkha*). This is the first moment in which the meditator experiences the bliss of *nibbāna* in his or her beginningless round of *saṁsāra*. Such a person is called a *Sotāpanna*, or Stream-Winner — one who can reobserve the bliss of *nibbāna* as fruition (*phala*). This type of *nibbāna* is called "*nibbāna* with the aggregates remaining."

Likewise, those who practice with the aim of reaching higher stages uproot defilements (*kilesa*) according to the stages reached in the Holy Life (*brahmacariya*). Their experience is also of *nibbāna* with a base (substratum) remaining (*sopādisesa-nibbāna*). The *Arahant*, one in whom the taints (*āsava*) are completely destroyed through the practice of meditation, experiences the bliss of *nibbāna*. This kind of *nibbāna* is also called "*nibbāna* with a base remaining." Although the *Arahant* is liberated from the bonds of becoming, such as greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), his sense faculties have not yet been destroyed, and he can experience physical pleasure and pain, because his five aggregates still remain. The extinction of greed, hatred, and delusion describes "*nibbāna* with a base remaining" (*sopādisesa-nibbāna-dhātu*). When the Venerable Sāriputta, the chief disciple of the *Buddha*, was asked by the devotee Jabukhādaka, "*Nibbāna*, *nibbāna*, is the saying, friend. What is *nibbāna*?" Venerable Sāriputta replied, "the destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion, friend, is called *nibbāna*." It is also called the "cessation of defilements" (*kilesa-nibbāna*). Therefore, it is said, in Theravādin Buddhism, that it is possible to experience the bliss of *nibbāna* here and now, in this very life. There is no need to wait until we die.

PARINIBBĀNA: There are three rounds of becoming: (1) *kamma*, (2) defilements (*kilesa*), and (3) the results of *kamma*, or *vipāka*. These are interdependent, repeatedly coming into existence as the wheel of life (*bhava-cakka*), or *saṁsāra*. When one is born as a being (becoming), this is the birth of the five aggregates. Whenever sense objects (*ārammaṇa*) arise at the sense bases (*āyatana*), craving (*taṇhā*) and attachment (*upādāna*) motivated by ignorance (*avijjā*) arise. Consequently, by craving for sense objects, one accumulates wholesome and unwholesome *kamma*. Then, as a result of *kamma*, one has

to be born again. However, for the *Arahant*, who has totally eradicated all traces of defilements that lead to becoming, or rebirth, there is no more rebirth. He is liberated from the cycle of *saṁsāra*, from repeated existence. The *Arahant* may have performed many good deeds in his lifetime, but his actions are karmically ineffective, for they are not motivated by mental defilements such as greed, hatred, and delusion. Any action that gives a result is called "*kamma*." An action that does not give any wholesome or unwholesome result is called "functional" (*kiriya*). A seed cannot grow without soil and a fertilizer. Likewise, for the *Arahant*, who has uprooted ignorance and desire, there is not fertile soil in which karmic energies can arise and produce a result. When the *Arahant* dies, the five aggregates cease, never to rise again. When the wax and wick of a candle burn down, the flame dies out. In the same way, the *Arahant* will, upon death, have no further becoming. There is only the end of *dukkha* — peace. This is "*nibbāna* without the aggregates remaining" (*anupādisesa-nibbāna*) and is known as *parinibbāna*, or the final passing away of the *Arahant*.

> *"There is, O Bhikkhus, the unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and unconditioned. Were there not the unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and unconditioned, there could be no escape from the born, originated, made, and conditioned. Since there is the unborn, unoriginted, unmade, and unconditioned, there is escape from the born, originated, made, and conditioned."*[491]

Because *nibbāna* is expressed in negative terms here, some may think that it is negative and expresses self-annihilation. *Nibbāna* is not annihilation of self, because there is no self to annihilate. Rather, *nibbāna* can be said to be the annihilation of craving, hatred, delusion, and the false perception of selfhood. *Nibbāna* does not signify nothingness. *Nibbāna* is Ultimate Truth, or Ultimate Reality, incomprehensible to the experience of worldly persons. It is the domain of the Noble Ones only and is realized by the wisdom of their own experience (*paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhi*).

The Fourth Noble Truth[492]

> *"And this, once again, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering: It is, indeed, that Noble Eightfold Path: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. The Middle Path, O Bhikkhus, leads to nibbāna."*

[491] *Udāna*, Cūḷa Vagga.

[492] Parts of this section are adapted from a radio lecture given in Colombo, Śri Lanka, in 1933 by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera entitled "The Essence of Buddhism" and published as part of *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures* (= The Wheel Publication no. 394/396) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1994]), pp. 1—13.

The Third Noble Truth, the Cessation of Suffering, has to be realized by developing the Noble Eightfold Path (*aṭṭhangika magga*), which is the Fourth Noble Truth. This unique path is the only straight route that leads to *nibbāna*. It avoids the extreme of self-mortification, which weakens one's intellect, and the extreme of self-indulgence, which retards one's moral progress.

The Noble Eightfold Path is the path of righteousness and wisdom that really constitutes the essence of Buddhist practice — the mode of living and thinking to be followed by any true follower of the *Buddha's* Teachings. The Noble Eightfold Path can be summed up as follows:

1. The first stage of the Eightfold Path is Right Understanding (*sammā diṭṭhi*), that is, to view in accordance with reality suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the way leading to the cessation of suffering. This leads to an understanding of the true nature of existence and of the moral laws governing the same. In other words, it is the right understanding of the *Dhamma*, of the Four Noble Truths. This right understanding is the keynote of Buddhism.

2. The second stage of the Eightfold Path is Right Thought (or Right Intention) (*sammā saṁkappa*), that is, thoughts of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), free from craving, of goodwill (*avyāpāda*), free from aversion, and of compassion (*avihiṁsā*), free from cruelty. This leads to a pure and balanced state of mind, free from sensual lust, ill will, and cruelty.

   By *saṁkappa* is meant the mental state, which, for want of a better English rendering, may be called "initial application" (*vitakka*). This important mental state eliminates wrong ideas, or notions, and helps the other moral adjuncts to be diverted to *nibbāna*.

   It is one's thoughts that either defile or purify a person. One's thoughts mold one's nature and control one's destiny. Evil thoughts tend to debase one just as good thoughts tend to elevate one. Sometimes, a single thought can either destroy or save a world.

   Sammā saṁkappa serves the double purpose of eliminating evil thoughts and developing pure thoughts. Right thoughts, in this connection, are threefold: thoughts (1) of renunciation (*nekkhamma*), (2) of goodwill (*avyāpāda*), and (3) of compassion (*avihiṁsā*).

   These good and evil forces are latent in all. As long as we are worldlings (*puthujjana*), these evil forces rise to the surface at unexpected moments in disconcerting strength. When, at long last, they are totally eradicated on attaining Arahantship, one's stream of consciousness has become perfectly purified.

   Attachment and hatred, coupled with ignorance, are the chief causes of all evil prevalent in this deluded world. "The enemy of the whole world is lust, through which all evils come to living beings. This lust, when obstructed by some cause, is transformed into wrath."

One is either attached to desirable external objects or repulsed with aversion in the case of undesirable objects. Through attachment, one clings to material pleasures and tries to gratify one's desires by some means or other. Through aversion, one recoils from undesirable objects and even goes to the extent of destroying them, inasmuch as their very presence is a source of irritation. With the giving up of egoism by one's own intuitive insight, both attachment and hatred automatically disappear.

The *Dhammapada* states:[493]

> *"There is no fire like passion,*[494] *no grip like hate,*[495] *no net like delusion,*[496] *no river like craving."*

As one ascends the spiritual ladder, one renounces, by degrees, both gross and subtle involvement in material pleasures, like grown-up children giving up their childhood toys. Being children, they cannot be expected to possess an adult's understanding, and they cannot be convinced of the worthlessness of their temporary pleasures. With maturity, they begin to understand things as they truly are, and they voluntarily give up their toys. As the spiritual pilgrim proceeds on the upward path by his constant meditation and reflection, he perceives the futility of pursuing base material pleasures and the resultant happiness in forsaking them. He cultivates non-attachment to the fullest degree. "Happy is non-attachment in this world, so is the transcending of all sensory pleasures," is one of the early utterances of the *Buddha*.

The other most troublesome defilement is anger, aversion, ill will, or hatred, all of which are implied by the Pāḷi term *vyāpāda*. It consumes the person in whom it arises and consumes others as well. The Pāḷi term *avyāpāda*, literally, "non-enmity," corresponds to the most beautiful virtue *mettā*,[497] which means "loving-kindness," or "goodwill towards all without any distinction." He whose mind is full of loving-kindness can harbor no hatred towards anyone. Like a mother who makes no difference between herself and her only child and protects it even at the risk of her own life, even so does the spiritual pilgrim who follows this Middle Path radiate his thoughts of loving-kindness, identifying himself with all. Buddhist *mettā* embraces all living beings, animals not excluded.

Harmlessness (*avihiṁsā*), or compassion (*karuṇā*), is the third and last member of *saṁkappa*.

Karuṇā is that sweet virtue that makes the tender hearts of the noble quiver at the sufferings of others. Like Buddhist *mettā*, Buddhist *karuṇā* is limitless. It is not

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[493] *Dhammapada*, XVIII, Taints, verse 251.

[494] Passion (*rāga*) burns internally without showing any external signs, such as smoke. *Rāga* may be translated as "lust, greed, excitement, passion." It is synonymous with *lobha* "greed."

[495] Seizure by a predator such as a python, a crocodile, a tiger, and so forth, grips a person only in a single existence, but seizure by ill will (*vyāpāda*) continues on and on, life after life after life.

[496] There is no net (or snare) comparable to delusion (*moha*) in that it binds and entangles one all around.

[497] Sanskrit *maitrī*.

restricted only to co-religionists or co-nationals or even to human beings alone. Compassion limited in any way is not true *karuṇā*.

A compassionate one is as soft as a flower. He cannot bear the sufferings of others. At times, he might even go to the extent of sacrificing his own life to alleviate the sufferings of others. In every *Jātaka* story, it is evident that the *Bodhisatta* tries his best to help the distressed and the forlorn and to promote their happiness in every possible way.

Karuṇā has the characteristics of a loving mother, whose thoughts, words, and deeds always tend to relieve the distress of her sick child. It has the property of not being able to tolerate the suffering of others. Its manifestation is perfect non-violence and harmlessness — that is, a compassionate person appears to be absolutely non-violent and harmless. The sight of the helpless states of those who are distressed is the proximate cause for the practice of *karuṇā*. The consummation of *karuṇā* is the eradication of all forms of cruelty. The direct enemy of *karuṇā* is cruelty, and the indirect enemy is homely grief.

Buddhist *mettā* appeals to both the rich and the poor, for Buddhism teaches its followers to elevate the lowly, help the poor, the needy, and the forlorn, tend the sick, comfort the bereaved, pity the wicked, and enlighten the ignorant.

Compassion forms the fundamental principle of both Buddhist lay persons and members of the Holy Order.

The *Buddha* advises His disciples thus:

> *"Wherefore, O Bhikkhus, however men may speak concerning you, whether in season or out of season, whether appropriately or inappropriately, whether courteously or rudely, whether wisely or foolishly, whether kindly or maliciously, thus, O Bhikkhus, must you train yourselves: 'Unsullied shall our minds remain, neither shall evil words escape our lips. Kind and compassionate ever shall we abide, with hearts harboring no ill will. And we shall enfold those very persons with streams of loving thoughts unfailing, and proceeding forth from them, we shall radiate the whole wide world with constant thoughts of loving-kindness, ample, expanding, measureless, free from enmity, free from ill will.' Thus must you train yourselves."*

He whose mind is free from selfish desires, hatred, and cruelty, and is saturated with the spirit of selflessness, loving-kindness, and harmlessness, lives in perfect peace. He is, indeed, a blessing to himself and others.

3. The third stage is Right Speech (*sammā vācā*). It consists in abstinence from false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, and useless speech. In other words, Right Speech is speech that is not false, not harsh, not scandalous, not frivolous, that is, it consists of speech that is truthful, mild, pacifying, gentle, and wise.

   He who tries to eradicate selfish desires cannot indulge in uttering falsehood or in slandering for any selfish end or purpose. He is truthful and trustworthy and

ever seeks the good and beautiful in others instead of deceiving, defaming, denouncing, or disuniting his own fellow beings. A harmless mind that generates loving-kindness cannot give vent to harsh speech that first debases the speaker and then hurts another. What he utters is not only true, sweet, and pleasant but also useful, fruitful, and beneficial.

4. The fourth stage is Right Action (*sammā kammanta*), that is, abstaining from intentional killing or harming any living creature, abstaining from taking what is not freely given, abstaining from sexual misconduct (adultery, rape, and seduction), and abstaining from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.

   These evil deeds are caused by craving and anger, coupled with ignorance. With the gradual elimination of these causes from the mind of the spiritual aspirant, blameworthy tendencies arising from them will no longer be manifested. Under no pretext will one kill or steal. Being pure in mind, one leads a pure life.

5. The fifth stage is Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*): giving up wrong livelihood, one earns one's living by a right form of livelihood, that is, from a livelihood that does not bring harm and suffering to other beings (avoiding soothsaying, trickery, dishonesty, usury, and trading in weapons, meat, living beings, intoxicants, or poison).

   Hypocritical conduct is cited as wrong livelihood for monks and nuns.

   Strictly speaking, from an *Abhidhamma* standpoint, by Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood, three abstinences (*virati*) are meant, but not the three opposite virtues.

6. The sixth stage is Right Effort (*sammā vāyāma*). It is the fourfold effort to put forth the energy, to prod the mind, and to struggle:

   a. To prevent unarisen unwholesome mental states from arising;
   b. To abandon unwholesome mental states that have already arisen;
   c. To develop wholesome mental states that have not yet arisen;
   d. To maintain and perfect wholesome mental states that have already arisen.

   In other words, it is the fourfold effort that we make to overcome and avoid fresh bad actions by body, speech, and mind and the effort that we make in developing fresh actions of righteousness, inner peace, and wisdom, and in cultivating them to perfection.

   Right Effort plays a very important part in the Noble Eightfold Path. It is by one's own effort that one obtains Liberation and not by merely seeking refuge in others or by offering prayers.

   Both a rubbish-heap of evil and a storehouse of virtue are found in man. Through effort, one removes this rubbish-heap and cultivates the latent virtues.

7. The seventh stage is Right Mindfulness (*sammā sati*), or alertness of mind. It consists of abiding self-possessed and attentive, contemplating according to reality:

   a. The body (*kāyānupassanā*);
   b. Feelings (*vedanānupassanā*);
   c. The state of the mind (*cittānupassanā*);
   d. The contents of the mind (*dhammānupassanā*);

   seeing all as composite, ever-becoming, impermanent, and subject to decay. It is maintaining ever-ready mental clarity no matter what we are doing, speaking, or thinking and in keeping before our mind the realities of existence, that is, the impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and egolessness (*anattā*) of all forms of existence.

   Mindfulness on these four objects tends to eradicate misconceptions with regard to desirability (*subha*), so-called "happiness" (*sukha*), permanence (*nicca*), and an immortal soul (*attā*), respectively.

8. The eighth stage is Right Concentration of mind (*sammā samādhi*). It consists of gaining one-pointedness of mind and entering into and abiding in the four fine-material absorptions (*rūpa jhānas*) and the four immaterial absorptions (*arūpa jhānas*). Such a kind of mental concentration is one that is directed towards a morally wholesome object and always bound up with Right Thought, Right Effort, and Right Mindfulness.

   A concentrated mind acts as a powerful aid to see things as they truly are by means of penetrative insight.

Thus, the Noble Eightfold Path is a path of morality (*sīla*), of mental training (*samādhi*), and of wisdom (*paññā*).

Morality consists of Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. Mental training consists of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. Wisdom consists of Right Understanding and Right Thought.

According to the order of development, morality (*sīla*), mental training (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are the three stages of the Path.

Thus, this liberating Eightfold Path is a path of inner training, of inner progress. By mere external worship, mere ceremonies and selfish prayer, one can never make any real progress in righteousness and insight. As the *Buddha* said:

> *"Be your own island of refuge, be your own shelter, do not seek after any other protection. Let the truth be your island of refuge, let the truth be your shelter, do not seek after any other protection."*

To be of real effect and to ensure absolute inner progress, all our efforts must be based upon our own understanding and insight. All absolute inner progress is rooted in Right

Understanding, and, without Right Understanding, there is no attainment of perfection and of the unshakable peace of *nibbāna*.

Strictly speaking, from an ultimate point of view, the factors that make up the Noble Eightfold Path signify eight mental properties (*cetasika*) collectively found in four classes of supramundane consciousness (*lokuttara citta*), whose object is *nibbāna*. They are:

1. Faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*);
2. Initial application (*vitakka*);
3. Abstinence (*virati*) from wrong speech;
4. Abstinence (*virati*) from wrong action;
5. Abstinence (*virati*) from wrong livelihood;
6. Energy (*viriya*);
7. Mindfulness (*sati*);
8. One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

All these factors denote the mental attitude of the aspirant who is striving to gain Liberation.

Meditation on the Four Noble Truths

Although meditation on the Four Noble Truths is noted in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, only two of these Truths, *dukkha* and the origin of *dukkha*, are considered suitable for the practice of meditation. These two Truths are mundane, while the remaining two are supramundane. Meditation requires observation of objects that are mundane and conditioned. Supramundane states are not suitable for meditation, because they are beyond the grasp of ordinary worldlings. They cannot have the Noble Path and fruition (*magga-phala*) as a subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) before attaining *gotrabhū*, which is the state of consciousness that has realized *nibbāna* and that changes one's lineage from a worldling (*puthujjana*) to a Noble One (*Ariya*).

When *vipassanā* insight becomes fully developed, *anuloma-ñāṇa* (adaptation knowledge) arises, which is followed by *gotrabhū* insight. Following immediately after *gotrabhū* is the realization of the Noble Path and fruition. At the moment of *gotrabhū*, the meditator experiences a glimpse of *nibbāna*. Before that moment, it is not possible to take *nibbāna* as the subject of meditation, nor the paths and fruitions. However, those who practice contemplation on the attributive qualities of *nibbāna* (*upasamānussati*), such as being devoid of lust (*virāga*), can gain tranquility or concentrative absorptions (*jhāna*). But this practice is taken solely for the purpose of achieving one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*) and is not the realization of the Four Noble Truths.

The meditator should take the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) as a meditation subject. If the meditator observes one of the five aggregates with awareness, and realizes the truth of *dukkha*, that moment of penetrative insight (*paṭivedha*) permits a

simultaneous understanding of the other three Truths as well. At the time of awakening (*abhisamaya*), the meditator comprehends that suffering (*dukkha*) is to be rightly understood, that the cause of suffering (that is, *taṇhā* "craving") is to be abandoned, that the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha* or *nibbāna*) is to be realized, and that the path to the cessation of suffering (*dukkhanirodhagāmini paṭipadā*) is to be developed. Indeed, through the development of the Noble Eightfold Path, the meditator comprehends life, which is the five aggregates, as *dukkha*; eradicates the origin of *dukkha* (*taṇhā*); and experiences the bliss of the cessation of suffering, which is the realization of *nibbāna*.

When one practices *vipassanā*, the subject of meditation must be one of the five aggregates or mental and material (*nāma-rūpa*) elements. The meditator should observe the subject until it is clearly understood as impermanent (*anicca*). This leads to the comprehension that, because all things are impermanent, they are *dukkha* and also devoid of self. Thereupon, the meditator comprehends the characteristics of suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), and insubstantiality, or lack of selfhood (*anattā*), through the direct experience of them as universal laws. He or she has then realized the Four Noble Truths. At that point, he or she becomes an *Ariya*, a Noble One.

The Twelve Aspects of Wisdom

There are three aspects of knowledge that relate to each of the Four Noble Truths: (1) knowledge of the Truth (*sacca-ñāṇa*); (2) knowledge of the function of the Truth (*kicca-ñāṇa*); and (3) knowledge of the function of the Truth that has been performed (*kata-ñāṇa*). After setting forth the Four Noble Truths in the Wheel of *Dhamma* Discourse (Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta), the Blessed One next explained these three aspects of each of the Four Truths. Briefly, these three aspects refer to three aspects, or kinds, of realization. The first kind of knowledge recognizes that the Noble Truth is, indeed, true. The second kind of knowledge recognizes what is the appropriate action to take with regard to that particular Noble Truth. And the third kind of knowledge recognizes that the appropriate action has, indeed, been taken with regard to that particular Noble Truth. When one has fully realized all twelve aspects of knowledge with regard to the Four Noble Truths, one has attained Enlightenment.

The Truth of Dukkha

> *"This is the Noble Path as to Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH (*sacca-ñāṇa*): Here, the *Buddha* explains how knowledge of the Truth of Suffering (*dukkha*) arises. All mental and physical phenomena that arise at the sense doors are seen by the Noble Ones as suffering. In short, the five

aggregates of clinging that are regarded as a "being" are, in fact, an ever-changing process, and, therefore, are *dukkha*. Life itself is *dukkha*. The *Buddha* realized the Truth of *dukkha* through the practice of *vipassanā* and the attainment of the Noble Path.

After attaining the *Arahant* path of insight, the *Buddha* experienced the bliss of *nibbāna* and understood the five aggregates of clinging as *dukkha*. This wisdom arose in Him not from any teacher, but by direct personal experience after cultivating the Noble Eightfold Path. In the *sutta*, it says: "… things unheard before …" This means that He was not indebted to anyone else for His knowledge. Because the *Buddha* was a fully Self-Enlightened One, He is known as *Sammāsambuddha*. The extraordinary knowledge that rose in Him was described as vision (*cakkhu*), knowledge (*ñāṇa*), insight (*vijjā*), and light (*āloka*). The *Buddha* used many descriptions so that different audiences could understand His Teachings according to their temperaments. In the sense of seeing, knowledge is termed "vision"; in the sense of knowing, it is termed "knowledge"; in the sense of knowing analytically in several ways, knowledge is termed "wisdom"; in the sense of knowing penetratively, knowledge is called "insight"; and, in the sense of illuminating (shedding light), it is called "light."

VISION AROSE (*cakkhuṁ udapādi*): The Pāḷi word *cakkhu* conveys the idea of seeing, or vision. The knowledge that sees clearly, as if with the physical eye, is termed "vision" (*cakkhu*). For example, a man who is blind and then suddenly regains his eyesight sees clearly, for the first time, everything that he had not seen before. Likewise, after one has developed *vipassanā* insight and path insight, one sees the five aggregates of clinging as *dukkha*, which one had not seen clearly before, because one had been living in delusion. With the development of the Noble Path insight, a meditator's realization of the true nature of suffering will be even clearer. When the *Buddha* said, "there arose in me the seeing," it means clarity of vision.

KNOWLEDGE AROSE (*ñāṇaṁ udapādi*): The Pāḷi word *ñāṇa* signifies knowing or knowledge. It is a common expression of knowing, meaning "ignorance is rooted out."

WISDOM AROSE (*paññā udapādi*): The word *paññā* signifies knowing analytically in various ways. When wisdom arises during *vipassanā* meditation, the meditator knows the difference between mind and matter, cause and effect, and he or she knows how mental and material processes are arising and passing away moment by moment. The meditator knows these to be impermanent, suffering, and not subject to anyone's control. Such knowledge is described as knowing analytically. The *Buddha*, therefore, said that such wisdom had arisen in Him.

INSIGHT AROSE (*vijjā udapādi*): *Vijjā* means penetration, or penetrative insight. Knowing penetratively is derived from the word *paṭivedha*, penetrating through. Just as when hidden by a screen or a wall, objects cannot be seen, but when a hole is made in the screen or wall, objects become visible through this opening, likewise, this penetrative insight is capable of piercing the veil of delusion, or *moha*. At first, under the control of

delusion, what is seen, heard, and so forth is not known as impermanent, suffering, and egoless. When they are known as impermanent, suffering, and egoless, such knowledge is called "knowing penetratively." The *Buddha* declared, therefore, that such penetrative insight had arisen in Him.

LIGHT AROSE (*aloko udapādi*): *Aloka* literally means "bright," but it is used here to mean "illumination," or "seeing clearly." It refers to the knowledge that discerns all phenomena distinctly. Before path knowledge has been developed, the true nature of impermanence, suffering, and selflessness is neither seen nor known. When *vipassanā* insight and Noble Path insight are developed, their true nature becomes apparent. The *Buddha*, therefore, described this light that had arisen in Him.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF FUNCTION (*kicca-ñāṇa*):

> *"This Noble Path of Suffering should be perceived. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

When the *Buddha* says that the Noble Truth of Suffering should be perceived, He means that one should not run away from life, but should, instead, strive to understand the suffering of life and investigate it. In *vipassanā* practice, the meditator investigates and carefully observes the five aggregates of clinging in order to understand rightly. The meditator realizes that every process is impermanent, because it perishes after arising (*hutvā abhāvato anicca*). Suffering is overwhelming, because it oppresses by incessant arising and passing away (*udayabbaya paṭipīlanaṭṭhena dukkhā*), and it is not soul or self, because it is not amenable to control. The psychophysical process occurs on its own, not subject to one's will (*avasavattanaṭṭhena anatta*). In this manner, the meditator understands the Truth of Suffering comprehensively and rightly (*pariññeyya*). While the *Buddha* realized the Truth of Suffering without having heard it from anyone else, disciples can realize the *Dhamma* only after hearing it from the *Buddha* or other disciples who have grasped it. One should note that the understanding of the truth must come through direct personal experience, not by hearsay or intellectual understanding.

KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT HAS BEEN PERFORMED (*kata-ñāṇa*):

> *"This Noble Path of Suffering has been perceived. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

This is how knowledge arose as to what has been perceived with regard to the Truth of Suffering. The understanding of impermanence, suffering, and no-self at the preliminary stage of *vipassanā* is not yet a mature understanding. When the meditator observes mental and physical processes, these are understood as impermanent, suffering,

and devoid of self, although the true nature of processes that have not been observed may not be understood as such. It is only when *vipassanā* insight is fully accomplished, and the wisdom of the Noble Path (*ariya-magga*) fully developed, that the cessation of suffering is experienced. Then, the Truth of Suffering is rightly and fully accomplished.

Even at the first stage of wisdom of the Noble Path, the Stream-Winner (*sotāpatti magga ñāṇa*) has not yet fully comprehended the Truth of Suffering. Only when Arahantship has been attained is the Truth of Suffering completely realized. Once the *Buddha* had gained the *Arahant* path and fruition, and attained full Enlightenment, the Truth of Suffering was fully realized — nothing remained to be done. This realization came through the knowledge of retrospection (*paccavekkhaṇa ñāṇa*) after attaining the *Arahant* path and fruition.

The Truth of the Cause of Suffering

> *"This is the Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH (*sacca-ñāṇa*): "This" refers to the three kinds of craving (*taṇhā*): (1) craving for gratification of the senses (*kāma-taṇhā*); (2) craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*); and (3) craving for annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*). These have already been explained. *Kāma-taṇhā*, craving for gratification of the senses, is the craving for objects of sensory pleasure that have to be searched and worked for in order to be obtained. It is evident that some people undergo intense suffering, even to the extent of losing their lives, while in the pursuit of the objects of their desires. Any attempt to curb the craving that has arisen results in suffering and unhappiness. To look and work for things that are not easy to attain is also suffering. The task of protecting or preserving things that are acquired is also very burdensome. Whenever one experiences unhappiness or sorrow in life, it is mainly due to craving. However, the majority of people are under the delusion that *taṇhā* is the source of happiness. They consider it blissful to enjoy the pleasures of various sense objects. If *taṇhā* is not aroused, in the absence of pleasurable objects, life becomes dull and monotonous. For these individuals, listening to *Dhamma* is utterly boring, while entertainment, such as television, movies, concerts, video games, and so forth, is found to be enjoyable. By nurturing *taṇhā*, one reinforces ignorance latent in the mind.

Pleasurable sights and sounds excite, delight, and produce craving, and this craving gives rise to attachment. As a result of attachment, effort has to be put forth for its fulfillment. This produces *kamma*, or *saṁkhāra* ([predisposing] mental formations), and the activities performed in the pursuit of *taṇhā* over a lifetime arises in consciousness as *javana* (impulse moment) consciousness, or *abhisaṁkhāra* consciousness. Craving holds onto the mental object that has appeared at the moment of death, and rebirth consciousness is immediately conditioned upon that death consciousness moment. From

the moment of conception in the new life, it may be said that all the sufferings with regard to that new life have begun, having their roots in craving. For the *Arahant*, in whom *taṇhā* has been eradicated, no further rebirth, hence, no further suffering, is possible. Therefore, it is evident that sensory desire, *kāma-taṇhā*, is the real cause of suffering — the Truth of the Cause, or Origin, of Suffering (*samudaya-sacca*).

Those who aspire to realms of form and formless spheres and for attainment of jhānic (meditative absorptions) states practice tranquility meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*). They are reborn into the worlds of the form (*rūpa*) and formless (*arūpa*) as *Brahmās*, and they are free from the suffering of physical pains as well as mental afflictions. Their life span is measured in terms of world cycles (*kappa*[498]). From the worldly point of view, their life may be deemed one of happiness, but, when their life span is terminated, they face death and suffer the agonies of death. They suffer mental distress, too, for not having the wish of immortality fulfilled. After death, troubles and tribulations await them in the sensory sphere (*kāma-loka*), to which they are destined. Thus, craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) in the *Brahma-loka*[499] is also the Truth of Suffering. Craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*) after death is also a cause for suffering, since it encourages unwholesome deeds in this life. The nihilist does not fear the repercussions of undertaking unwholesome actions but, instead, may pursue these unchecked. Having performed unwholesome *kamma*, nihilists are reborn in the lower realms and undergo the woes and miseries of those existences. It is certain, therefore, that craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*) arises out of a nihilistic view of life. This is also the Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*samudaya-sacca*).

The *Buddha* realized these as the root causes of suffering, as He declared: "the vision arose in me …" Knowing that this is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering is the knowledge of the truth (*sacca-ñāṇa*). This knowledge arises both before and after the advent of the Noble Path. At the moment of the path insight, the function of knowing the truth is accomplished, by way of abandoning (*pahāna-paṭivedha*) as well. To summarize: that which knows the Four Noble Truths before, after, and at the moment of path consciousness is the knowledge of the truth (*sacca-ñāṇa*).

THE KNOWLEDGE OF FUNCTION (*kicca-ñāṇa*):

> *"This Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering should be eradicated. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

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[498] Sanskrit *kalpa* "world cycle, world period," an inconceivably long period of time, an eon. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 90—91.

[499] The *Brahma* world, the highest world, the world of Celestials (which is, like all other realms, subject to change and destruction). It consists of twenty levels, sixteen of which are worlds of forms, and four of which are inhabited by beings who are incorporeal (*arūpa*). The inhabitants of the *Brahmaloka* are free from *kāma*, or sensory desires. Rebirth in the *Brahmaloka* is the reward of great virtue accompanied by the meditative absorptions (*jhāna*).

If freedom from suffering is desired, the root cause of suffering must be removed. For example, in order to cure a disease, the root cause of the illness must be eradicated by applying an appropriate medication. In the same way, *taṇhā* is the root cause of worldly suffering. Because of *taṇhā*, one has to suffer repeatedly in the rounds of existence (*saṁsāra*). *Taṇhā* must be uprooted in order to overcome worldly sufferings. *Taṇhā* is the Truth of the Cause, or Origin, of Suffering that should be eradicated, abandoned, given up (*pahātabba-dhamma*).

It is most essential to know how *taṇhā* should be abandoned. The *Buddha* made the resolution, "Let craving not appear, let it not arise; I shall keep My mind alone by itself, free from craving." Is it possible to maintain such a state of mind? Those who believe in the possibility of doing so should actually try to attain this state of mind and see how long they can maintain it. It is impossible to maintain a *taṇhā*-free mind for a prolonged period of time if craving is not yet totally uprooted. This is because human beings are social beings, living in society in a sensory realm (*kāma-loka*). One has to suffer the arising of *taṇhā*, because one has not yet subdued it. Therefore, *taṇhā* needs to be eradicated (*pahātabba-dhamma*) whenever possible.

THREEFOLD CRAVING: There are three kinds of *taṇhā* that should be eliminated: (1) craving that motivates physical and vocal actions; (2) craving that stimulates the mind in the realm of imagination and fantasy; and (3) craving that is latent in the mind waiting to manifest itself when the opportunity arises.

Of these, the craving that motivates physical and vocal actions is classified as *vītikkama-kilesa*: those defilements that motivate transgression of ethical conduct. This kind of craving can be eradicated through the application of the moral precepts (*sīla*). For example, the person observing moral precepts does not steal anything belonging to another, even though he or she may desire it; neither does such a person commit sexual misconduct; nor does he or she tell lies; nor take intoxicating substances. In this way, craving is kept in abeyance. This is how craving is eliminated by means of *sīla*, moral precepts.

The craving that arises in the mind due to mental objects (imaginings or fantasies) is defined as *pariyuṭṭhāna kilesa*, and can be eradicated only by *samādhi*, a concentrated mind. For one who practices tranquility meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*), or calm abiding, thoughts, desires, and imaginings about sense objects are suspended. Only if the mind is left free to wander on its own is it possible to become lost in thoughts or imagination about desirable sense objects. For those first practicing meditation, and for whom concentration is not yet developed, thoughts of sensory pleasures arise unabatedly. When concentrative absorption (*jhāna*) is attained, thoughts regarding gross types of sensory pleasures cease to arise but only for the duration of the absorption. This is how *samādhi* removes the craving for sensory pleasures by means of suppression (*vikkhaṁbhana pahāna*).

Craving for existence (*bhava-taṇhā*) and craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*) persist even in one who has attained jhānic absorptions. They even remain with some of the *Brahmās* who abide in the realm of jhānic states. Therefore, it can be seen

that these kinds of craving cannot be eradicated by *samādhi* or tranquility meditation. They can only be subdued.

LATENT DEFILEMENTS (*anusaya-kilesa*): The *taṇhā* that is latent in the mind, waiting to manifest itself whenever the opportunity arises, is called latent defilements (*anusaya-kilesa*). These defilements are of two kinds: (1) the potential defilements that are latent in the sense objects (*ārammaṇānusaya*) and (2) the potential defilements that are latent in the minds of beings (*santānānusaya*). When one perceives an object at the moment of seeing, hearing, and so on, one is not aware of these objects as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anattā*). Instead, craving for these objects arises upon thinking about them. Such defilements are known as *ārammaṇānusaya*. These kinds of defilements can be dispelled by *vipassanā* insight. However, *vipassanā* insight is incapable of removing defilements that may arise in the objects of which one is unaware. The hidden, latent defilements remain unaffected.

The defilements that have not yet been eradicated by Noble Path insight, and remain as latent dispositions[500] in the minds of beings, are known as *santānānusaya*. These defilements can only be uprooted by means of Noble Path insight, which, in turn, can only be achieved through the culmination of *vipassanā* insight. Therefore, one should develop *vipassanā* insight to eliminate latent defilements.

The knowledge of function (*kicca-ñāṇa*) that knows what should be done with respect to the Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*samudaya sacca*) must be developed prior to the advent of the Noble Path. The knowledge of function is advanced knowledge of what should be known, what should be abandoned, what should be realized, and what should be developed. To the *Buddha*, this knowledge appeared without having heard it previously from anyone.

KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT HAS BEEN PERFORMED (*kata-ñāṇa*):

> *"This Noble Truth as to the Cause of Suffering has been eradicated. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

[500] The latent dispositions (*anusaya*) are defilements that "lie along with" (*anusenti*) the mental process to which they belong, rising to the surface as obsessions whenever they meet with suitable conditions. The term "latent dispositions" highlights the fact that the defilements are liable to rise so long as they have not been eradicated by the supramundane paths. Though all defilements are, in a sense, latent dispositions, the following seven are the most prominent: the latent dispositions to: (1) sensory lust (*kāmarāga*); (2) attachment to existence (*bhavarāga*); (3) aversion (*paṭigha*); (4) conceit (*māna*); (5) wrong views (*diṭṭhi*); (6) doubt (*vicikicchā*); and (7) ignorance (*avijjā*). Both sensory lust and attachment to existence are modes of greed (*lobha*); the others are each distinct *cetasikas* "mental factors." Thus, altogether, six *cetasikas* function as latent dispositions (*anusaya*). Cf. Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed.), *Abhidhammattha Sangaha: Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Pāḷi Text, Translation & Explanatory Guide* (Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions [2000]), Chapter 7. Compendium of Categories, §9. Latent Dispositions, p. 268.

The *Buddha* explained how the knowledge of craving that should be eradicated had been eradicated (*kata-ñāṇa*), through the insight of retrospection. At the first stage of Sainthood, the stage of a Stream-Winner (*Sotāpanna*), craving that leads to rebirth in the lower realms of existence is eliminated. At the second stage of Sainthood, the stage of Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmī*), the grosser forms of craving for sensory pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*) are abolished. At the third stage of Sainthood, the stage of Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*), the subtle forms of craving for sensory pleasures are eradicated. At the fourth stage of Sainthood, the stage of *Arahant*, all kinds of remaining cravings are completely uprooted. Such eradication of craving is referred to as knowing the origin of suffering by the penetrative insight of abandoning (*pahāna-paṭivedha*). The act of abandoning, or eradicating, constitutes knowing what should be known by the Noble Path. Thus, the Truth of the Origin of Suffering is that which should be abandoned. This abandonment is penetrative abandoning (*pahāna-paṭivedha*).

The knowledge that craving has been eradicated (*kata-ñāṇa*) is quite important. The goal of practicing *vipassanā* is to remove defilements (*kilesa*) together with craving (*taṇhā*). Attainment of higher insight (the accomplishment of what should be done) is complete only when craving and defilements are eradicated. It is essential to examine oneself to see whether one is really free from craving or not. If craving is not completely uprooted, then no claim to the attainment of Arahantship is admissible.

The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering

> *"This is the Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH (*sacca-ñāṇa*): The Noble Truth of the Complete Cessation of Suffering refers to the state of *nibbāna* that is experienced at the moment of insight into the Noble Path. When craving is abolished, all sufferings (mind, matter, and conditioning states) cease. Knowing the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering is called "*nirodha-sacca-ñāṇa*." This knowledge arises before and after the Noble Path insight and is realized at the moment of the Noble Path. At the moment of the Noble Path attainment (*ariya-magga*), the knowledge of truth (*sacca-ñāṇa*) is the same as the knowledge of the Noble Path (*ariya-magga-ñāṇa*), which experiences *nibbāna* by realization.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF FUNCTION (*kicca-ñāṇa*):

> *"This Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering should be realized. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

The *Buddha* said that the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, *nibbāna*, should be realized. The knowledge that knows that the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering should be realized is called "knowledge of the function" (*kicca-ñāṇa*), since it is the knowledge that knows what function is to be performed with respect to the cessation of suffering and how realization takes place. At the moment of the full and firm establishment of insight, when there is an equanimity toward all formations (*saṁkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*) and while observing the arising and passing away of phenomena, the pace of awareness accelerates until the objects and awareness plunge into a state of cessation where all *saṁkhāras* come to an end.

At the time of realizing the cessation of all conditioned states, craving also ceases. Thus, the cessation of craving is termed the Truth of Cessation (*nirodha-sacca*), which is known by direct realization of the Noble Path. Such realization is known as penetrative insight by realization (*sacchikiriya-paṭivedha*). The *Buddha* accomplished the knowledge of the function of *nibbāna* through the path and fruition of the final stage of an *Arahant* while sitting at the foot of the *bodhi*-tree. He continued to recount how He had developed the knowledge of what had been done regarding the Truth of Cessation.

KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT HAS BEEN PERFORMED (*kata-ñāṇa*):

> *"This Noble Truth as to the Cessation of Suffering has been realized. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

This is an account of how the knowledge of the Noble Truth of Cessation had been realized by means of the attainment of the path and fruit of Arahantship. This knowledge arises through the wisdom of retrospection (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*). The meditator who attains absorptions (*jhāna*) and/or the Noble Path and its fruitions (*magga-phala*) reobserves these after they have been achieved.

The Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering

> *"This is the Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH (*sacca-ñāṇa*): The Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of suffering is known, in its shortened form, as the Truth of the Path (*magga-sacca*), which is how it will be referred to here. Knowing that the Noble Eightfold Path is the path that leads to the cessation of suffering, *nibbāna*, it is called the knowledge of the truth (*sacca-ñāṇa*). This knowledge arises before, after, and at the moment of the Noble Path. At first, the meditator comes to know this by learning or hearsay. It is said that the Truth of the Path is a *Dhamma* to be desired, to be aspired to,

and to be appreciated. Learning through hearing, the meditator develops a strong intention to practice. Likewise, there should be a strong intention to realize the Truth of Cessation, which a worldling cannot perceive. The realization of the Noble Path, *nibbāna*, is not a thing that one can contemplate before attaining. As for the *Buddha*, just as He also gained the Truth of Cessation through His own intuitive insight, He also gained the knowledge of the Truth of the Path through His own intuition. That is why He said "with respect to things unheard before." At the moment of the Noble Path, only the cessation of suffering is realized. This is known as penetrative insight by development of the Noble Path (*bhāvanā-paṭivedha*).

The Truth of the Path should be developed through direct experience. The Noble Path cannot develop itself — one must begin by developing the preliminary path (*vipassanā*) as a first step. For this reason, *vipassanā* is regarded as the right path that leads to the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*).

THE KNOWLEDGE OF FUNCTION (*kicca-ñāṇa*):

> *"This Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering should be developed. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

Knowing the Truth of the Path that should be developed within oneself is called the knowledge of function (*kicca-ñāṇa*). It is the knowledge that knows what should be developed. One should remember that the Truth of *dukkha* should be fully understood through direct experience, while the Truth of the Path should be developed within oneself. The aim of the development of the path is to experience the bliss of *nibbāna*, and the practice of *vipassanā* meditation is essential practice for the development of the Noble Path. The Truth of Suffering can be realized through the preliminary path of *vipassanā*. During *vipassanā* meditation, the meditator observes mental and material aggregates, which appear at every moment. The meditator first develops the insight of distinction between the object and its awareness. This is followed by understanding the cause and its effect. As the meditator proceeds, he or she comes to know the nature of perpetual change or flux. The phenomenal world is constantly arising and passing away. It is impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and devoid of self (*anattā*). The personal realization of these realities is Right Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*). When Right Understanding is developed, Right Thought (*sammā-saṁkappa*) and other paths have also been developed. When the path of *vipassanā* is developed and becomes fully established, the Noble Eightfold Path (*aṭṭhangika-magga*) has also evolved.

Intellectual understanding of the phenomena of aggregates is good as a foundation prior to the advent of the Noble Path. But it should be remembered that knowing the function of the Noble Path is *kicca-ñāṇa*, which should be developed through *vipassanā* and the Noble Path. In this way, one realizes the Truth of Cessation, or *nibbāna*.

KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT HAS BEEN PERFORMED (*kata-ñāṇa*):

> *"This Noble Truth as to the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering has been developed. Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the seeing, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light."*

When reobserving with the wisdom of retrospection (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*), the *Buddha* realized that the Noble Eightfold Path had been fully developed at the attainment of the path of Arahantship. The three aspects of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) — (1) realization (*sacca*); (2) function (*kicca*); and (3) accomplishment (*kata*) — with respect to the Four Noble Truths have now been explained in twelve ways, that is, in terms of the fourfold three aspects of knowledge.

These may be summarized as follows:

1. Knowing the Four Truths before, after, and at the moment of the arising of the Path is called *sacca-ñāṇa*, or Knowledge of the Truth. This knowledge consists of knowing: (1) this is the Truth of Suffering; (2) this is the Truth of the Cause of Suffering; (3) this is the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering; and (4) this is the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

   This knowledge arises in advance of the Path. For disciples, the knowledge of the Truth of the Cessation and the Path is acquired before the arising of path consciousness (path insight) by only hearsay or learning (*sutamaya-ñāṇa*). The Truth of Cessation experienced at the moment of the arising of path insight, in addition to the remaining three Truths, is also accomplished at the moment of path insight as complete understanding (*pariññā*), abandoning (*pahāna*), and developing (*bhāvanā*).

2. Prior knowledge of what should be known, what should be abandoned, what should be realized, and what should be developed is *kicca-ñāṇa*, or the Knowledge of Function. Knowledge of the Function consists of knowing: (1) that *dukkha* should be fully understood; (2) that the origin of suffering (*samudaya*) should be eradicated; (3) that the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*) should be realized; and (4) that the path (*magga*) leading to the cessation of suffering should be developed. This knowledge arises before *vipassanā* meditation starts, as well as during *vipassanā* practice, but prior to the advent of the Noble Path.

3. Knowing that what should be done has been done is called *kata-ñāṇa*. If the four functions of fully understanding, eradicating, realizing, and developing have been accomplished, this fact is known through the wisdom of retrospection. This is known as the Knowledge of Completion of what has to be done.

These are the twelve kinds of knowledge that are made up of four Truths: the fourfold Knowledge of Realization; the fourfold Knowledge of Function; and the

fourfold Knowledge of Completion, that is, of what has been done. Of these twelve, it is important to know clearly how the Knowledge of Truth arises and how the four functions are to be performed. A brief description follows:

1. The Noble Truth of Suffering should be fully understood; such understanding is known as *pariññā-paṭivedha*.
2. The Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering should be eradicated; such eradication is known as *pahāna-paṭivedha*.
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering should be realized; such realization is known as *sacchikiriya-paṭivedha*.
4. The Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering should be developed; such development is known as *bhāvanā-paṭivedha*.

It should be noted that, when the meditator realizes cessation, *nibbāna*, at the arising of path insight, all four Truths are simultaneously accomplished.

Vipassanā and the Four Noble Truths

During *vipassanā* practice, the Four Noble Truths are temporarily accomplished. If the meditator observes the physical and mental processes of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) as meditation objects (realizing them to be impermanent, suffering, and devoid of self), this is considered understanding the Truth of Suffering. At that moment, craving (*taṇhā*) cannot arise; this is the temporary abandonment of craving (*tadanga-pahāna-paṭivedha*). At the same time, the delusion that would misapprehend the observed object as permanent, happiness, and self temporarily ceases. Consequently, when delusion ceases, other conditional formations (*saṁkhāras*), which arise when conditioned by delusion, also cease. This is realization through temporary cessation (*tadanga-nirodha*). The *vipassanā* path is developed every moment through understanding the true nature of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). This is *bhāvanā-paṭivedha*. While practicing *vipassanā* meditation by knowing the Truth of *dukkha* through awareness, the remaining three Truths are accomplished by the completion of the task of eradication (*pahāna*), realizing (*sacchikiriya*), and developing (*bhāvanā-paṭivedha*). Thus, all four Truths are developed through *vipassanā* practice.

> *"As long, O Bhikkhus, as the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Four Noble Truths, under their three aspects and twelve modes, was not perfectly clear to me, so long did I not acknowledge, in this world, inclusive of gods, māras, and brahmās and among the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment."*

The *Buddha's* attainment of the insight of the *Arahant* Path is called *sammā-sambodhi*, fully self-enlightened, because insight was achieved without instruction from others. Through this wisdom, the *Buddha* knew rightly and perfectly everything that was to be known. Therefore, it is also called *sabbaññuta-ñāṇa*, "to know everything." *Pacceka Buddhas* (silent *Buddhas*) are also self-enlightened (*sambuddha*), but they are unable to teach the *Dhamma* to others. Their enlightenment is not as complete as the *Sammā-sambuddhas*. If the disciple (*sāvaka*) attains the insight of the *Arahant* Path, it is simply known as *bodhi*, knowledge of Enlightenment, without any attributions, such as *sammā-* or *sam-* "fully, completely, thoroughly; rightly, properly".

When the *Buddha* attained the state of Enlightenment, the knowledge that knows all *Dhammas* (*sabbaññuta-ñāṇa*) also arose simultaneously. After acquiring the faculty of rightly and perfectly knowing everything that was to be known, Buddhahood was attained. Therefore, the full self-enlightenment (*sammā-sambodhi*) is regarded as the knowledge responsible for the attainment of Buddhahood. According to the above passage, the *Buddha* said that He had not yet declared the attainment of perfect Enlightenment which gives rise to Buddhahood.

For how long did He withhold this declaration of the attainment of Buddhahood? He stated that He withheld it for as long as His knowledge of the Four Noble Truths in the three aspects and twelve ways was not fully clear to Him. There were some recluses and leaders of religious sects at the time of the *Buddha* who claimed themselves to be enlightened, to know everything of the past, present, and future. When learned people, recluses, and lay persons began to scrutinize them, they were found to fall far short of their claims. The *Buddha*, therefore, reiterated that He had not previously claimed to rightly and perfectly know everything that was to be known (*sabbaññuta-ñāṇa*) before His attainment of full self-enlightenment (*sammā-sambodhi*).

The Buddha's Enlightenment

> *"When the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these Truths, under their three aspects and twelve modes, became perfectly clear to me, then only did I acknowledge, in this world, inclusive of gods, māras, and brahmās and among the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable Supreme Enlightenment."*

After the knowledge of seeing reality as it is (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa*) was fully clear in the three aspects and twelve ways, the *Buddha* declared His attainment and realization of the incomparable, most excellent, supreme, and perfect Enlightenment — the attainment of perfectly-enlightened supreme Buddhahood. This declaration was made not just to that region, to that part of the world, but to the whole universe.

This declaration was an open invitation to all to investigate the *Buddha's* claim and to have their inquiries answered by Him. This is, indeed, a very bold, solemn declaration, which was not made impulsively without due reflection, but made only after

the *Buddha* had reassured Himself by the wisdom of retrospection that He had really attained Buddhahood.

> *"And there arose in me the knowledge and insight: 'Unshakable is the deliverance of my mind, this is my last birth, and, now, there is no existence again'."*

In this passage, the *Buddha* states that the deliverance of His mind was unshakable. This is to distinguish between the ultimate deliverance of *nibbāna* and the deliverance that is the result of the attainment of meditative absorptions. For those who achieve absorption concentrations, or jhānic states, the mind is free from defilements, such as sensory desire and ill will. These defilements remain calm, suppressed in the mind. But when the absorptions weaken, sensory desire, ill will, and so forth arise again. These jhānic states only suppress the defilements (*vikkhambhana*) for a period of time. The deliverance won by the *Buddha* was obtained through the complete eradication of the defilements (*samuccheda-pahāna*), including all traces of the defilements (*paṭipassaddhi vimutti*). Deliverance is achieved through complete eradication of the defilements and is the result of the path and fruit of Arahantship. This deliverance remains steadfast and unshakable. Consequently, the *Buddha* stated: "[u]nshakable is the deliverance of my mind."

As explained previously, the main cause of rebirth, of continuity of existence, is craving, *taṇhā*. When the *Buddha* attained Arahantship, craving was totally uprooted. Therefore, He said that there would be no more rebirth or becoming for Him. The *Buddha* reflected soon after His Enlightenment under the *bodhi*-tree:[501]

> *"I have gone through many rounds of birth and death, seeking, but not finding, the builder of this house.*[502] *Sorrowful, indeed, is birth and death again and again!*
>
> *"But now I have seen you, Oh house-builder; you shall not build this house (for me) again — its rafters are broken; its ridgepole is shattered. My mind has reached the unconditioned;*[503] *the end of craving*[504] *has been attained."*[505]

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[501] *Dhammapada*, XI, Old Age, verse 153—154.

[502] The "house" is the body, the "house-builder" is craving (*taṇhā*). "Seeking, but not finding," means failing to attain Enlightenment.

[503] *Nibbāna*.

[504] The Fruit of Arahantship.

[505] These verses are the expressions (paeans) of the intense and sublime joy that the *Buddha* felt at the moment He attained Enlightenment. As such, they are replete with a wealth of sublime meaning and deep feeling. Here, the *Buddha* admits His past wanderings in cyclic existence (*saṁsāra*), which thus proves His belief in rebirth. He was compelled to wander, and, consequently, to suffer as long as He could not find the builder of this house, the body. In His final birth, He discovered, by His own intuitive wisdom, the elusive builder residing not outside but within the recesses of His own mind. It was craving (*taṅhā*) or attachment, a self-creation, a mental element latent in all. The discovery of the builder is the eradication of craving by attaining Arahantship. The rafters of this self-created house are the defilements (*kilesas*). The ridge-pole that supports the rafters is ignorance (*avijjā*). The destruction of the ridge-pole of ignorance by wisdom

Buddhas and *Arahants*, who have completely eradicated craving, must still live life like others, since their present existence has been brought forth by craving before craving became eradicated. Therefore, the Buddha said: "… this is my last birth, and, now, there is no existence again." These are the concluding words of the Blessed One.

Through greed, hatred, and delusion, overwhelmed by greed, hatred, and delusion, one aims at one's own ruin, at others' ruin, or at the ruin of both, and one suffers mental pain and grief. If, however, greed, hatred, and delusion are eradicated, abandoned, given up, one aims neither at one's own ruin, nor at other's ruin, nor at the ruin of both, and one suffers no further mental pain and grief.

> *"This is nibbāna realizable through one's effort, immediate, inviting, attractive, and comprehensible to the wise. Now, insofar as the Bhikkhu has realized the complete extinction of greed, hatred, and delusion, insofar is nibbāna realizable, immediate, inviting, attractive, and comprehensible to the wise."*[506]

Reflections and Acclamations on the Dhamma

> *Thus did the Exalted One expound, and the delighted Bhikkhus applauded the words of the Exalted One.*
>
> *When the doctrine was being expounded, the dustless, stainless, Truth-seeing eye arose in Venerable Koṇḍañña, and he saw that "whatever is subject to origination is also subject to cessation."*

These words of rejoicing were recorded by the reciters at the First Council, which was held three months after the *Buddha's* passing away into *nibbāna*. This was in order to show how the group of five *Bhikkhus* were gladdened by the discourse. The record states that Venerable Koṇḍañña became a Stream-Winner (*Sotāpanna*) during or at the end of the discourse. Indeed, while Venerable Koṇḍañña was listening to the discourse, the progress of insight became increasingly developed within him during each passing moment. He came to know the Four Noble Truths as they should be known and, thus, attained the path and fruition of Stream-Winner. The knowledge of Koṇḍañña is considered stainless, because, when he attained the state of Stream-Winner, his mind became free from lust (*rāga*), free from the defilement (*kilesa*) of wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*), and free from doubt (*vicikicchā*). When one attains the state of Stream-Winner, the eye of wisdom is opened. One sees, or realizes, *nibbāna* at that very moment.

When did the eye of wisdom open? At the moment when Koṇḍañña realized that everything that has the nature of arising also has the nature of dissolution. There are two

(*paññā*) results in the complete demolition of the house. With the demolition of the house, the mind attains the unconditioned, which is *nibbāna*.

[506] *Anguttara Nikāya* 1.158.

modes of realization at this stage. Realizing by means of *vipassanā* insight is the moment of developing insight into the arising and passing away of phenomena. *Vipassanā* insight is fully developed at the stage of equanimity of formations. While observing the continuous process of arising and dissolution of mental and physical phenomena (*nāma-rūpa* [mind and body]), a stage is reached at which all formations completely cease, and the peace of *nibbāna* is experienced. This is realization by the Noble Path of insight.

> *When the Buddha expounded the discourse of the Dhammacakka, the earth-bound deities exclaimed: "This excellent Dhammacakka, which could not be expounded by any ascetic, priest, god, māra, or brahmā in this world, has been expounded by the Exalted One in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares."*
>
> *Hearing this, the devas of Cātummahārājika, Tāvatiṁsā, Yāmā, Tusitā, Nimmānarati, Paranimmitavasavatti, and the brahmās of Brahmā Pārisajja, Brahmā Purohita, Mahā Brahmā, Parittābhā, Appamāṇābhā, Ābhassarā, Parittasubhā, Appamāṇasubhā, Subhakiṇṇā, Vehapphalā, Avihā, Atappā, Sudassā, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭhā, also raised the same joyous cry.*
>
> *Thus, at that very moment, at that very instant, this cry extended as far as the brahma-realm. These ten thousand world systems quaked, tottered, and trembled violently.*
>
> *A radiant light, surpassing the effulgence of the gods, appeared in the world.*

When the *Buddha* set in motion the wheel of the *Dhamma*, the earth-bound *devas* proclaimed in one voice: "This excellent *Dhammacakka*, which could not be expounded by any ascetic, priest, god, *māra*, or *brahmā* in this world, has been expounded by the Exalted One in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares."

Having heard this proclamation by the earth-bound *devas*, the Cātummahārājika *devas*, the *devas* in the upper realms, and the *brahmās* all proclaimed in unison. In a single instant, the voice of proclamation went forth up to ten thousand world-systems. The entire cosmos of myriad world-systems shook upwards and downwards and trembled in all four directions. An immeasurable sublime radiance, caused by the mighty and profound Teaching, surpassed even the majestic divine radiance of the *devas* appearing on earth.

> *Then, the Exalted One said: "Friends, Koṇḍañña has indeed understood. Friends, Koṇḍañña has indeed understood."*
>
> *Therefore, Venerable Koṇḍañña was named Aññāta Koṇḍañña.*

At the end of the discourse, the *Buddha* perceived that Koṇḍañña had attained the knowledge of a Stream-Winner. Therefore, He made this utterance: "Friends, Koṇḍañña has indeed understood. Friends, Koṇḍañña has indeed understood."

Venerable Koṇḍañña who, having seen the truth (*diṭṭhi-dhamma*), arrived at the truth (*patta-dhamma*), clearly knew (*vidita-dhamma*) and penetrated the truth (*pari-*

yogāḷa-dhamma); who, having overcome doubt (*tiṇṇa-vicikicchā*) and become free from skepticism (*vigatakathaṁkatha*), having acquired strength of conviction in the Teaching (*vesārajjapatta*) and become independent of others (*aparapaccaya*) in the dispensation (*sāsana*) of the *Buddha*, requested, in these words: "Lord, may I be allowed to take up the Holy Life in the presence of the *Buddha*. May I receive the higher ordination."

The *Buddha* permitted him to join the Order (*Sangha*) with these words: "*Ehi Bhikkhu*," "Come, O *Bhikkhu*." The *Buddha* then said: "Well taught is the *Dhamma*. Come and practice the Holy Life for the sake of the complete ending of suffering." Koṇḍañña was already an ascetic, but not of the *Buddha's* Order. He, therefore, asked to be admitted. When the *Buddha* said, "*Ehi Bhikkhu*," He acknowledged Koṇḍañña's entry into the Order.

There was this group of only five ascetics from the human world who heard the first discourse, but the *Milindapañhā* states that 118 million *brahmās* and innumerable *devas* attained to the higher knowledge upon hearing the *Buddha's* discourse. Among the five ascetics, only Koṇḍañña attained to the higher knowledge. The remaining four — Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma, and Assaji — had not yet attained to the higher knowledge. After Koṇḍañña was admitted to the Order, the *Buddha* gave guidance and instructions on the practice of the *Dhamma* to the remaining four members of the group. Then, Vappa and Bhaddiya attained the higher knowledge. The *Buddha* accepted their request for admission to the Order by saying: "*Etha Bhikkhu*," "Come, *Bhikkhus*." The *Buddha* then gave guidance and instructions to Mahānāma and Assaji without going on the alms-rounds for food for Himself. Three *Bhikkhus* are said to have gone out for alms food, and all six of them, including the *Buddha*, sustained themselves on the food brought back by the other three. Being thus guided and instructed by the *Buddha*, the stainless eye of wisdom arose in Mahānāma and Assaji. Having seen, having reached, having clearly understood, and having penetrated through to the *Dhamma*, leaving uncertainty behind, having overcome all doubts, being free from wavering resolution, having acquired the strength of conviction with respect to the Teaching, having personal knowledge of the *Dhamma*, not depending on others with regard to the Teaching, they made this request to the *Buddha*:

> *"May we, Lord, be allowed to take up the Holy Life in the presence of the Buddha. May we receive higher ordination in the Order."*

The *Buddha* replied:

> *"Come, Bhikkhus. Well taught is the Dhamma. Come and practice the Holy Life for the sake of the complete ending of suffering."*[507]

The invitation by the *Buddha* is the act of ordination and, accordingly, Mahānāma and Assaji became *Bhikkhus* in the Order of the *Buddha's* dispensation. According to the

[507] *Vinaya Piṭaka* 1.13.

Pāḷi *Vinaya* text, the four remaining ascetics — Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma, and Assaji — attained the higher knowledge in two groups of two each, whereas the Commentaries state that they attained the higher knowledge one by one as follows:

Koṇḍañña attained the higher knowledge on the full-moon day of July, the same day that the *Buddha* delivered the discourse. Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahānāma, and Assaji attained the higher knowledge on the first, second, third, and fourth waning days after the full-moon, respectively. On the fifth day, the *Buddha* assembled all five *Bhikkhus* together and taught them the Discourse on the Characteristics of Non-self (Anatta-lakkhaṇa Sutta). At the end of this discourse, all five *Bhikkhus* attained Arahantship, the final stage of Sainthood. There were then six *Arahants*, including the *Buddha*, in the world — a truly wonderful event. ■

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22

The Noble Eightfold Path

"Of paths, the Eightfold is the best; of truths, the Noble Four are best; of mental states, detachment is the best; of human beings, the All-Seeing One is best."[508]

A Path of Purification[509]

The *Buddha's* Teachings are essentially a "path of purification" (*visuddhimagga*). The *Buddha* never intended that people should worship Him or accept His Teachings on faith alone. He wanted all beings to be free from the bondage of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Liberation (*vimokkha*) in Buddhism means freedom from all kinds of mental impurities. In order to accomplish this, one must develop the Noble Eightfold Path (*aṭṭhangika magga*). During His forty-five years as a Fully-Enlightened One, the *Buddha* imparted the *Dhamma* according to individual capacities, aptitudes, and depths of understanding. But the essence of all the discourses recorded in the Buddhist scriptures are to be found in the teachings of the Noble Eightfold Path, which are:

1. Right Understanding (*sammā diṭṭhi*);
2. Right Thought (or Right Intention) (*sammā saṁkappa*);
3. Right Speech (*sammā vācā*);
4. Right Action (*sammā kammanta*);
5. Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*);
6. Right Effort (*sammā vāyāma*);
7. Right Mindfulness (*sammā sati*); and
8. Right Concentration (*sammā samādhi*).

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[508] *Dhammapada*, XX, The Path, verse 273.

[509] Parts of this chapter are adapted from Rewata Dhamma, *The First Discourse of the Buddha* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1997]), pp, 33—53, and parts from a radio lecture given in Colombo, Śri Lanka, in 1933 by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera entitled "The Essence of Buddhism" and published as part of *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures* (= The Wheel Publication no. 394/396) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1994]), pp. 1—13. See also Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, *Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2001]) and Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Noble Eightfold Path: Way to the End of Suffering* (Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions [1994]).

The order in which the factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are listed are not to be understood as successive states of practice. They are all to be developed together. Since each factor is linked to the others, and all are mutually supportive, the path constitutes a method of training that must be practiced as a whole to be effective. The above sequence of the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path is arranged in order of teachings (*desanākkama*). Other pedagogic approaches list the eight factors in order of arising (*uppattikkama*), in order of eradicating (*pahānakkama*), in order of practice (*paṭipattikkama*), and according to realms (*bhūmikkama*).

The Noble Eightfold Path comprises three aspects: (1) moral conduct (*sīla*), or self-discipline; (2) concentration (*samādhi*), or mental discipline (*bhāvanā*); and (3) wisdom (*paññā*). It will be helpful to understand them according to these three aspects. Morality consists of Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. Mental training consists of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. Wisdom consists of Right Understanding and Right Thought. By practicing Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood, self-discipline is established. By practicing Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration, mental discipline is established. Developing Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration leads to insight (*vipassanā*) and transcendental knowledge (*maggaphalañāṇa*), in other words, wisdom pertaining to both mundane and supramundane levels. Each of these factors of the Noble Eightfold Path will be described in brief, emphasizing their practical aspects.

Right Understanding

> *"What, O Bhikkhus, is Right Understanding? To understand suffering, to understand the origin of suffering, to understand the extinction of suffering, to understand the path leading to the extinction of suffering — this is called Right Understanding."*[510]

Right Understanding means the realization of the Four Noble Truths, which one can realize through developing Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. According to the Commentaries (*Anguttara* and *Uparipaṇṇāsa Aṭṭhakathā*), there are, altogether, six kinds of Right Understanding:

1. Right understanding of *kamma* belonging to beings (*kammassakatā sammādiṭṭhi*);
2. Right understanding of meditative absorptions (*jhāna sammādiṭṭhi*);
3. Right understanding of insight (*vipassanā sammādiṭṭhi*);
4. Right understanding of the Noble Path (*magga sammādiṭṭhi*);
5. Right understanding of the fruition of the Noble Path (*phala sammādiṭṭhi*);
6. Right understanding of reobservation (*paccavekkhaṇā sammādiṭṭhi*).

[510] *Dīgha Nikāya* 22. Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness).

In the case of understanding the fruition of the Noble Path and of reobservation, no specific effort is required for their development, since they are realized spontaneously as a result of understanding the Noble Path. As soon as one attains the realization of the Four Noble Truths, realization of the four fruitions follows spontaneously. Reobservation is the reflection of the path and fruition, which also follows spontaneously after the attainment of these. Therefore, one needs actively to strive only for the first four kinds of Right Understanding.

RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF KAMMA: The doctrine of *kamma* plays a very important part in Buddhism. It is a crucial point to grasp in the Teachings of the *Buddha*, and one needs to understand it firmly before one can practice the Noble Eightfold Path. Right understanding of *kamma* urges the individual to understand moral causation, which includes the understanding of the ten karmically wholesome actions (*kusala kamma*): (1) generosity; (2) morality; (3) meditation; (4) reverence; (5) service; (6) dedication of merit; (7) rejoicing in the merit of others; (8) hearing the *Dhamma*; (9) teaching the *Dhamma*; and (10) correcting wrong views held by others. Right Understanding also includes the understanding of the ten karmically unwholesome actions (*akusala kamma*): (1) killing; (2) stealing; (3) sexual misconduct; (4) lying; (5) slandering; (6) harsh speech; (7) idle chatter; (8) covetousness; (9) ill will; and (10) wrong view.

Wholesome actions bring good results. They are meritorious and lead to happiness here and hereafter.

> *"Perceiving the results of past wholesome actions, those who have done good deeds rejoice, they rejoice exceedingly; indeed, they rejoice here and now, even after death they rejoice — they rejoice in both places."*[511]

The ten wholesome actions, therefore, are called good courses of action (*kusala kammapatha*).

Unwholesome actions give rise to evil consequences. They are demeritorious and lead to suffering and unhappiness here and hereafter.

> *"Perceiving the results of past wrong actions, those who have done evil suffer — those who have done evil are afflicted; indeed, they suffer here and now, even after death they suffer — they suffer in both places."*[512]

The ten unwholesome actions, therefore, are called evil courses of action (*akusala kammapatha*).

Kamma literally means "action." The *Buddha* defined *kamma* as mental volition (*cetanā*). Any action one performs with pure intention is called wholesome *kamma*. If the intention is impure, then, it is called unwholesome *kamma*. *Kamma*, therefore, does

[511] *Dhammapada*, I. Twin Verses, verse 16.
[512] *Dhammapada*, I. Twin Verses, verse 15.

not merely have to do with external deeds, but it is the motive, intention, or volition involved in thinking, speaking, or acting. Any deed devoid of will or intention cannot properly be called *kamma*. Therefore, moral or immoral *kamma* is threefold according to the agent of action: (1) bodily action; (2) verbal action; and (3) mental action. Any action one performs with volition, or intention, through body, speech, or mind is called *kamma*. Whether *kamma* is wholesome or unwholesome is dependent upon the state of mind at the moment it is performed.

More than once, the *Buddha* emphatically stressed the psychological importance of *kamma*.

> *"O Bhikkhus, it is volition (cetanā) that I call kamma. Having willed, one acts with body, speech, and mind."*[513]

The understanding of moral causation urges a thoughtful person to refrain from unwholesome deeds and to do good. One who acknowledges moral causation knows well that it is their own actions that make their life miserable or happy. They know that the direct cause of the differences and inequalities of birth in this life are due to the good and unwholesome actions of past existences, as well as those of this life. Thus, they understand *kamma* and its results (*vipāka*) and strive to promote moral and spiritual progress. This kind of understanding, even on a mundane level, paves the way toward the realization of the Four Noble Truths.

In the endless cycle of rebirth (*saṁsāra*), the law of *kamma* prevails, with good actions leading to positive results and unwholesome actions leading to negative results. As a result of unwholesome *kamma* committed in past existences, one has to suffer ill consequences, such as a short life span, various ailments, ugliness, poverty, and so forth. Anyone who commits an unwholesome action in this life will bear the consequences in a future existence, perhaps by being born in an inferior plane of existence and accompanied by similar painful retributions.

As a consequence of good actions performed in previous existences, one lives happily and healthily in this present life, enjoying longevity, freedom from ailments, beauty, and wealth. By refraining from unwholesome actions and performing good actions of generosity and serving others, one is reborn in higher realms of existence, enjoying the results of these good actions. By understanding the result of wholesome and unwholesome *kamma*, one refrains from wrongdoing and accumulates good deeds, thereby establishing morality (*sīla*), which is the foundation of concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). As the *Buddha* said:

> *"O Bhikkhu, when you have purified your morality and maintained right view, then, leaning on your morality and established on it, you can develop the Four Foundations of Mindfulness."*[514]

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[513] *Anguttara Nikāya* 3.415.
[514] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* 5.143.

THREE PATHS: Clearly, right understanding of *kamma* and the observance of morality are preliminary foundations, or basic paths (*mūla magga*), which must be established before one practices meditation. As discussed below, on the development of *vipassanā*, access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) and absorption concentration (*appanā samādhi*) are prerequisites for achieving the initial purification of the mind. Since *vipassanā* is a preliminary path (*pubbabhāga magga*), it needs to be developed first in order to lead to the Noble Path (*ariya magga*). Thus, there are three essential steps included in the Noble Eightfold Path: (1) basic path (*mūla magga*); (2) preliminary path (*pubbabhāga magga*); and (3) Noble Path (*ariya magga*).

THE MEDITATON METHOD: After fulfilling the basic requirements of understanding the law of *kamma* and purifying morality (*sīla*), the meditator chooses one particular object (*kammaṭṭhāna*) on which to focus. When attention is dispersed over many objects or on some objects that are not easily observable, development of concentration will take a long time. Therefore, meditators should limit the number of objects they are focusing on and choose a vivid object suitable to their temperament.

At first, the meditator may begin by contemplating their in-coming and out-going breaths. After establishing concentration for some time, the meditator should direct his or her attention not to the breath itself but to the physical sensation of the breath. That is, one should observe the motion, or movement, of the breath, its heaviness or lightness, its qualities of hot or cold. To develop awareness and concentration, one should observe the entire breath in three phases: its (1) beginning, (2) middle, and (3) end. For instance, when the in-breath touches the nostrils, one should be aware of its beginning, middle, and end, trying to remain with that awareness until the out-breath is felt on the nostrils. In the same way, it is necessary to be aware of the out-breath in its three phases. This awareness should also remain until the in-breath comes and touches it so that there will be no gap between the two breaths. The mind will stay with the touch-feeling of the breaths, experiencing the entire breath (*sabbakāya-paṭisaṁvedī*) in each moment.

After establishing awareness and concentration by observing the physical sensation of the breath at the nostrils, the meditator can observe other mental and material objects that arise moment to moment in the body or the mind as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking. The meditator should be aware of any kind of feeling that arises in the body, whether gross or subtle, painful, pleasurable, or neutral. He or she should also be aware of cravings, aversions, happiness, sorrow, grief, and all kinds of mental and physical phenomena arising in the body and mind. This should be done objectively and precisely. The meditator should not think about them until he or she has developed insight, or the understanding of the true nature of these phenomena as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and without substance or self (*anattā*).

According to Mahāsī Sayādaw's (1904—1982) method, the meditator should begin by noting the element of air (*vāyo dhātu*), the characteristics of which are stiffness, pressure, and motion, and which become evident in the region of the abdomen. As the abdomen rises, one may silently note "rising." As it falls, one may silently note "falling." One begins by noting just these two motions — rising and falling. But this does not

comprise all that is to be done. While noting the rising and falling of the abdomen, if thinking arises, note that too as "thinking," and then return to noting the rising and falling of the abdomen. If a painful feeling appears in the body, note that too; when it subsides or when it has been noted for some time, return to the rising and falling. If there is bending, stretching, or moving of the limbs, the meditator should silently note "bending," "stretching," or "moving." Whatever bodily movement occurs, one should note it in the precise moment of its occurrence and then return to the rising and falling of the abdomen. When the meditator sees or hears anything clearly, he or she should note "seeing" or "hearing" for a moment and then return to the rising and falling process of the abdomen. If the meditator is aware of every process, sensation, or movement by noting it attentively without clinging to it, the mind becomes distinctly calm and concentrated and also realizes arising and awareness and objects differently. This is the beginning of the development of insight, which distinguishes mind from matter or object.

VIPASSANĀ WITH JHĀNA: The meditator who practices *vipassanā* after attaining *jhāna* is called "*jhānalābhi*," "one who is accomplished in absorption." The knowledge that accompanies the jhānic concentration is called "*jhāna sammādiṭṭhi*." While it is not absolutely required for *vipassanā* practice, nevertheless, jhānic concentration is good in itself, because it temporarily purifies the mind and is, therefore, a good foundation for *vipassanā* meditation. At first, the meditator needs to attain concentrative absorption (*jhāna*) through tranquility meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*). He or she then emerges from the jhānic state and starts to observe the jhānic factors, or mental states, such as initial application, sustained application, rapture, happiness, equanimity, one-pointedness of mind, contact, volition, intention, and so forth. These mental states become very clear, as do the material states on which *jhāna* depends. When the meditator observes these jhānic factors, he or she realizes that, in every moment, all these states are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and devoid of self. The meditator progressively attains different jhānic states, emerging from them to observe the mental and physical phenomena that constitute them. As one continues to practice, *vipassanā* insight becomes more and more developed, leading finally to the realization of *nibbāna*. As the *Buddha* said:

> *"In this Teaching, O Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu enters and stays in the first jhāna. When he emerges from that jhānic state, he contemplates on the physical body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness that exist in the jhānic moment, and he sees them as transitory, painful, and insubstantial. Seeing thus, he stays with vipassanā insight so gained and attains Arahantship, the cessation of all cankers."*[515]

This passage tells us how a meditator who accomplishes jhānic absorptions attains the Noble Path through meditating on jhānic consciousness by focusing on the mental concomitants and material qualities that have arisen and passed away in the mind-body

[515] *Anguttara Nikāya* 4.422.

continuum. After entering into and emerging from jhānic states, the meditator who is adept in jhānic absorptions meditates on the arising and passing away of jhānic factors (*jhānanga*) that occur from moment to moment in the jhānic states. The meditator who is not adept in the *jhānas* focuses, instead, on the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena (such as, for example, sensory desires, thoughts, feelings, and so on) as they occur from moment to moment, until he or she realizes these to be impermanent, suffering, and devoid of self.

THE ADVANTAGES OF JHĀNA: The meditator who is adept in jhānic absorptions enters into a jhānic state and thus meditates on any object that is very clear. When fatigue overwhelms the meditator during *vipassanā* meditation, as a result of observing many different objects appearing at the sense doors, he or she can revert to the jhānic state to relieve the fatigue or relax the mind. After relaxing the mind, one can resume *vipassanā* meditation, observing mental and material objects as they appear, noting their impermanence, suffering, and selflessness. Thus, based upon *jhāna*, *vipassanā* insight develops until it is strong enough to lead to the realization of *nibbāna* through insight of the Noble Path (*ariya-magga-ñāṇa*).

> *In these words, the Buddha talked about the time when He developed insight meditation based on jhāna. "Truly, when a meditator's concentration and vipassanā are not yet fully mature, if he sits for a long time practicing insight meditation, fatigue overwhelms him. Burning sensations fill the body as if flames are bursting out from it, and sweat pours out from the armpits. The meditator feels as if hot steamy gas is rushing forth from the top of his head. The tortured mind twitches and struggles. Thereupon, the meditator reverts to the jhānic states to reduce the mental and physical strain and to get relief from them. In this way, he refreshes himself. He then returns to the task of meditating. Sitting for long periods of time, he may again fatigue himself and seek relief once more by reentering a jhānic state. Indeed, he should do so. Entering jhānic states is greatly beneficial to vipassanā meditation."*[516]

The meditator who is not adept in jhānic absorptions observes all kinds of mental and material objects during *vipassanā* meditation. When fatigue overtakes one while meditating, such a one cannot, of course, seek relief by entering jhānic states. One should then revert to the limited object of the in-breaths and out-breaths, in other words, keeping attention on the nostrils and focusing on breathing in and breathing out. By limiting the object of concentration, mental and physical fatigue and strain are alleviated. Refreshed, one can then return to observation of all kinds of objects. When *vipassanā samādhi* becomes strengthened, the meditator is able to engage in meditation practice day and night without physical and mental discomfort or distress. At this stage, whenever objects arise, the meditator observes them objectively without effort, realizing the nature

[516] *Dīgha Nikāya* 1.387.

of these objects as they really are, namely, as impermanent, painful, and devoid of self. This understanding gathers speed, and, finally, both sense objects and awareness plunge into the state of cessation. This is the realization of the state of *nibbāna* by means of the Noble Path.

THE VIPASSANĀ PATH: As previously stated, there are three stages of the Noble Eightfold Path. The basic path, which consists of the right understanding of *kamma* (*kammasakatā sammādiṭṭhi*) and morality (*sīla*), must first be accomplished before the start of meditation. The *samatha yānika* meditator, that is, one who has become adept in the jhānic absorptions prior to beginning *vipassanā* practice, has to develop either access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) or absorption concentration (*appanā samādhi*). The *suddha vipassanā yānika* meditator, that is, one who practices *vipassanā* meditation without having first become adept in absorption concentration, must accomplish the basic *samādhi* path while contemplating the four primary material elements (*mahābhūtas*). Whenever the meditator becomes aware of any sense object, accompanied by one-pointedness of mind and momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*), the mind ceases to wander to other objects. In this way, the mind becomes purified, and every subsequent moment of awareness develops the *vipassanā* path.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIPASSANĀ KHAṆIKA SAMĀDHI: Effort exerted on behalf of awareness and mindfulness of each and every sense object arising at the sense doors (seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, and thinking) constitutes the path of Right Effort (*sammāvāyāma magga*). Awareness, or mindfulness, of these objects is the path of Right Mindfulness (*sammāsati magga*). Whenever mindfulness arises on an object and becomes fixed upon it, that is, becomes one-pointed, it is called the path of Right Concentration (*sammāsamādhi magga*). Together, these are known as *vipassanā khaṇika samādhi*, or *vipassanā* momentary concentration. These three factors — Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration — together make up the path of concentration (*samādhi magga*).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VIPASSANĀ INSIGHT: The knowledge that distinguishes sense objects from awareness arises after purity of mind has been attained through the path of concentration (*samādhi magga*). This clear comprehension of the distinction between the discerning mind and the material object constitutes purification of view. For example, when the meditator observes in-breaths and out-breaths, if awareness and concentration are developed, he or she knows or distinguishes awareness from the breaths. This is followed by discernment of the nature of cause and effect while in the course of meditation. For example, the meditator may recognize that there is awareness because of in-breaths and out-breaths, that there is bending because of the desire to bend, stretching because of the desire to stretch, movement because of the desire to move. The meditator may perceive how seeing arises because there is an eye to see and an object to be seen, or that hearing arises because there is an ear to hear and a sound to be heard, and so forth.

As meditation continues, the meditator becomes aware of the arising and passing away of every object. This results in the realization of the nature of impermanence with respect to both the sense object and awareness itself. This process of the continuous arising and passing away of mental and material phenomena leads to the conviction that *saṁsāra* is fearful, unpleasant, or suffering, devoid of self, not responsive to one's will or control. This lucid comprehension constitutes the path of Right Understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi magga*).

The *Buddha* said "*dukkhe ñāṇaṁ*" — understanding the truth of *dukkha* is the path of Right Understanding. When one observes mental and material objects from moment to moment, one realizes the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and insubstantiality through one's own experience and, thereby, comprehends the truth of *dukkha*. The task of comprehending the remaining three Noble Truths can then be accomplished. Bending or directing the mind to comprehend the true nature of mental and material phenomena as impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and devoid of self (*anattā*) is the path of Right Thought (*sammāsaṁkappa magga*). The two paths of Right Understanding and Right Thought are grouped together as the path of insight (*paññā magga*).

The three paths of concentration (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration) and the two paths of insight (Right Understanding and Right Thought) are classified as "working paths" (*kāraka magga*), or "task forces." They are forces for the development of awareness, concentration, and wisdom, and also for the realization of the Four Noble Truths. The path of morality (*sīla magga*) (Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood), which must be firmly established before meditation begins, becomes even purer during the course of meditation. In addition to these three divisions of the Noble Eightfold Path, there is the combined total of all eight steps, known as the preliminary path (*pubbabhāga magga*), that is developed with the progress of *vipassanā* meditation.

Right Thought (or Right Intention)

> *"What, O Bhikkhus is Right Thought? Thoughts free from craving (nekkhamma-saṁkappa), thoughts free from ill will (avyāpāda-saṁkappa), and thoughts free from cruelty (avihiṁsā-saṁkappa) — this is called Right Thought."*[517]

All thoughts of selflessness are considered factors of renunciation (*nekkhamma-saṁkappa*). These may include the practice of generosity, the renunciation of selfish attachments (such as going forth from the home life into homelessness), listening to discourses, or practicing righteousness. Engaging in *vipassanā* meditation fulfills the thought of renunciation, since it is a practice aimed at eliminating attachments and cravings. Thoughts of non-killing, wishing others well, and developing loving-kindness

[517] *Dīgha Nikāya* 22. Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness).

(*mettā bhāvanā*) render the mind free from ill will (*avyāpāda-saṁkappa*). Thoughts of non-violence, consideration, and compassion toward other beings are thoughts free from cruelty (*avihiṁsā-saṁkappa*).

Since thoughts of killing or cruelty cannot arise during *vipassanā* meditation practice, these two factors of Right Thought are fulfilled during meditation. *Vipassanā* meditation involves the bending of the mind toward recognizing mental and material phenomena in their true nature of arising and passing away and the truth concerning their impermanence, suffering, and insubstantiality.

The basic path (*mūla magga*) and preliminary path (*pubbabhāga magga*) are known together as the eightfold *vipassanā* path. When this *vipassanā* path becomes fully developed, it is transcended, and the Noble Path is attained, leading to the realization of *nibbāna*. Therefore, the *vipassanā* path may be called the forerunner of the Noble Path. In other words, they form the first and last parts of the same continuous path respectively. To attain the Noble Path, the meditator must first develop the *vipassanā* path. Having become established in the Noble Path, the meditator becomes a Noble One and experiences the bliss of *nibbāna*.

Right Speech

> *"What, O Bhikkhus, is Right Speech? It is avoidance of telling lies, avoidance of slandering, avoidance of hateful or abusive language, avoidance of frivolous talk or useless chatter. Bhikkhus, avoidance of these four unwholesome speeches is called Right Speech."*[518]

According to this definition, one should understand that religious conversation or truthfulness alone is not Right Speech. Abstinence from unwholesome speech is the essence of Right Speech. It should be noted that, when occasion arises for one to speak falsely, to slander, to use abusive language, or to chatter uselessly, if one restrains oneself from doing so, one is establishing the practice of Right Speech. Indeed, one who refrains from false speech will engage only in speech that is truthful, gentle, and beneficial and will promote harmony. The essential point is that one who abstains from wrong speech establishes the moral foundation of the path.

Furthermore, whenever one sees, hears, smells, touches, tastes, or thinks, if, by awareness and insight one realizes that sense objects are impermanent, no defilements can arise that would cause the utterance of wrong speech. In this way, through mindfulness meditation, one can temporarily prevent the arising of defilements, or *kilesas*. However, if one develops insight and attains the transcendental Noble Path with realization of *nibbāna*, then, wrong speech will have been dispelled completely. As one progressively attains the stages of Sainthood, one gradually uproots mental defilements, which are the cause of wrong speech. It is said that the first stage of Sainthood

[518] *Dīgha Nikāya* 22. Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness).

(*Sotāpanna*) dispels false speech, or telling lies; the third stage of Sainthood (*Anāgāmī*) dispels slandering and abusive language; and the fourth and final stage of Sainthood (*Arahant*) dispels frivolous talk and idle chatter. Here, speech is to be understood as any vocal action, whether following from deliberate mental intention or, if "not thinking," as a manifestation of a basic state of mind. If the mind is impure, one speaks wrongly; if it is pure, one speaks rightly. Therefore, purity of mind is very important.

Right Action

> *"What, O Bhikkhus, is Right Action? It is the avoidance of killing, the avoidance of stealing, the avoidance of sexual misconduct or misuse of the senses. O Bhikkhus, avoidance of these three physical evils is Right Action."*[519]

Here, too, restraint underlies Right Action, whether such actions are deliberate or rise unthinkingly from mental ill-discipline. When, for instance, occasion arises for one to commit killing, stealing, or sexual misconduct, if one restrains oneself from doing them, one is establishing the practice of Right Action. Here, physical action, or *kamma*, is based on mental volition (*cetanā*). These unwholesome deeds are committed only when the mind is overwhelmed with greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), or delusion (*moha*). Whenever these mental states arise in the mind, one should observe them objectively until they have disappeared or insight develops (seeing them as impermanent, productive of suffering, and devoid of self). This insight leads to the attainment of transcendental wisdom (*ariya-magga-ñāṇa*). With the development of insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*), mental defilements (*kilesas*) gradually fall away by themselves. The Middle Path is ultimately transcended by a state of consciousness in which all actions are automatically right minded. However, at the beginning, one must observe the precepts as a moral discipline and as the basis for what is to come.

Right Livelihood

> *"What, O Bhikkhus, is Right Livelihood? In this Teaching, the noble disciple avoids a wrong way of living, earning his living by a right way. This is called Right Livelihood."*[520]

When one's living is based on committing the three unwholesome physical actions (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct) and the four unwholesome vocal actions (false speech, malicious speech, harsh speech, and useless speech), it is called wrong

[519] *Dīgha Nikāya* 22. Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness).
[520] *Dīgha Nikāya* 22. Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness).

livelihood. If one does not engage in unwholesome actions and speech for one's means of living, it is called Right Livelihood.

Wrong livelihood constitutes earning one's living through unlawful or unwholesome means, such as killing and stealing. However, if one commits the three unwholesome physical actions and the four unwholesome types of speech, outside the context of earning one's livelihood, then, these constitute wrong action (*micchā-kammanta*) and wrong speech (*micchā-vācā*), respectively, but not wrong livelihood. For instance, killing flies, mosquitoes, insects, snakes, or an enemy through anger amounts to an unwholesome act or deed, a wrong action, but not wrong livelihood. On the other hand, earning one's living as an exterminator definitely constitutes wrong livelihood. Killing animals such as poultry, pigs, goats, or fish for the market or for one's own table also constitutes wrong livelihood.

In general, stealing is motivated by economic reasons and is, therefore, called wrong livelihood. If, however, the motivation for an action is driven by revenge or habit, then, it is considered wrong action and not wrong livelihood. Prostitution and human trafficking are regarded as wrong livelihood, as are the selling of weapons, meat, poisons, and intoxicants (alcoholic beverages and so-called "recreational drugs"). Lying is wrong speech when not motivated by economic reasons. However, when falsehood, or any kind of deliberate misrepresentation, is employed in a commercial transaction, in advertising, or in a court of law to promote a business, it amounts to wrong livelihood.

In the beginning, one should practice Right Livelihood by observing the moral precepts. As one practices insight meditation, positive action and Right Livelihood are established effortlessly.

Before one develops insight, or the Noble Path, it is impossible to establish these moral principles. Therefore, one should make a strong commitment to take the basic Five Precepts (not to kill, steal, lie, commit sexual misconduct, or take intoxicants) as the foundation of one's practice. Those who practice *vipassanā* should purify their behavior before practice is begun, since the development of concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*) is dependent upon moral purity (*sīla*).

Right Effort

> *"What, O Bhikkhus, is Right Effort? Here, in this Teaching, O Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu rouses his mind to avoid evil, unwholesome mental states that have not yet arisen, to overcome evil, unwholesome mental states that have already arisen, to arouse wholesome mental states that have not yet arisen, and to maintain wholesome mental states that have already arisen and not let them disappear but to bring them to growth, to maturity, and to the full perfection of development. And he makes effort, puts forth his energy, exerts his mind, and strives. This is called Right Effort."*[521]

[521] *Dīgha Nikāya* 22. Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness).

According to the *Buddha's* Teaching, there are four kinds of effort:

1. There is the effort to prevent any evil or unwholesome mental states that have not yet arisen from arising. One should make an effort not to perform any unwholesome actions. Whenever sense objects are present, sense awareness generally arises at that moment, followed by craving or aversion. If one makes an effort to develop moment-to-moment awareness by watching them objectively, one will be able to prevent the arising of unwholesome mental states or any craving or aversion.

2. There is the effort to dispel any evil or unwholesome mental states that have already arisen. There are three types of mental defilements: (1) the defilements that arise by committing evil physical and vocal actions (*vītikkama-kilesa*), such as killing, stealing, or lying; (2) the defilements that arise in the mind if something conditioned (*pariyuṭṭhāna-kilesa*), such as desire or anger, arises; and (3) the arising of latent dispositions (*anusaya-kilesa*), which are the result of previous unwholesome actions.

   Of these three kinds of defilements, physical and vocal actions can be dispelled by practicing the moral precepts. Defilements arising in the mind if something conditioned arises can be prevented through the practice of concentration (*samādhi*). Latent dispositions can be calmed temporarily by insight meditation. They can be rooted out gradually only as one attains the stages of Sainthood. It is with the objective of completely uprooting unwholesome latent dispositions that *vipassanā* meditation is practiced. One must exert great effort in meditation in order to attain the Noble Path that eradicates those defilements latent in the mind as subtle dispositions.

3. There is the effort to bring about pure, or wholesome, mental states that have not yet arisen. One should make an effort to accomplish any wholesome actions that have not yet been accomplished, such as acts of generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), meditation (*bhāvanā*), loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), and so on. These efforts will cultivate mental purification and the accumulation of wholesome thoughts. In short, effort should be made to induce any type of wholesome mental state that has not yet arisen. One should especially make great effort to develop awareness, concentration, and wisdom, so that one may reach the path of the Noble Ones.

4. There is the effort to maintain pure, or wholesome, mental states that have already arisen, and to develop them to maturity and perfection. One should make an effort to continue any meritorious deeds or wholesome things toward which there is already a disposition. One should develop objective and precise awareness at the moment of seeing, hearing, touching, feeling, thinking, or knowing sense objects. At that moment, one is not only preventing impurities or unwholesome mental states from arising, but also endeavoring to eradicate impurities or unwholesome thoughts, speech, or actions. This is perfecting insight that has already arisen. Thus, every

time one is aware of each phenomenon as a meditation practice, one is developing the path of Right Effort.

Right Mindfulness

> *"What, O Bhikkhus, is Right Mindfulness? Here, in this Teaching, a Bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body as the body, ardently, clearly comprehending, and mindfully, removing covetousness and grief in the world [of corporeality]; he dwells contemplating feelings as feelings; he dwells contemplating mental states as mental states; he dwells contemplating mental objects as mental objects, ardently, clearly comprehending, and mindfully, removing covetousness and grief in the world [of the five aggregates]. This is called Right Mindfulness."*[522]

The path of Right Mindfulness is comprised of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) — mindfulness (1) of the body, (2) of feelings, (3) of the (state of the) mind, and (4) of the contents of the mind. Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) is carried out in either of two ways: (1) by contemplation of respiration (*ānāpānasati*), that is, observing the in-breath and the out-breath, or (2) by contemplation of the thirty-two parts of the body (*kāyagatāsati*), that is, observing the separate parts of the body, such as head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin, and so on. According to tradition, one can achieve meditative absorptions (*jhāna*) by either of these two types of meditation. Through observation of the remaining objects of mindfulness (feelings, states of the mind, and contents of the mind), one can achieve access concentration[523] (*upacāra-samādhi*). Access concentration is suitable as a foundation for *vipassanā* meditation.

Therefore, anyone who wants to develop Right Mindfulness should select either body, feelings, state of the mind, or mental objects as a foundation for mindfulness, or awareness. It is very important to note or to be aware of the object in the present moment. For example, if the meditator contemplates on the in-breath and out-breath, he or she must note, or be aware, of the precise moment of the rising or falling of the breath. While contemplating body postures, such as walking, sitting, standing, or lying down, one should be aware of each moment. If any other body movements take place, such as reaching, stretching, bending, grasping, and so on, one should also become aware of them precisely and with bare attention. Another method of practice is to select the physical elements (*dhātu*) (earth, water, fire, air) as objects of contemplation. The earth element (*paṭhavī*) denotes the quality of heaviness or lightness in the body; the water element (*āpo*) refers to the quality of cohesion; the fire element (*tejo*) refers to the quality of hot or cold; and the air element (*vāyo*) refers to the quality of motion or movement in the body. Of these, the water element is so subtle that it is extremely difficult to perceive.

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[522] *Dīgha Nikāya* 22. Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness).

[523] Access, or neighborhood, concentration is the degree of concentration achieved just before entering any of the meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 215.

For this reason, only the elements of earth, fire, and air are recommended for mindfulness meditation by some meditation instructors.

If one experiences any feelings in the body, whether gross or subtle, one should be aware of them in the present moment. There are three kinds of feelings: (1) pleasant; (2) painful; and (3) neutral (neither pleasant nor painful). Whatever the feeling is that is experienced, one should be aware of it objectively and precisely, without reflecting upon it with discursive thought. One should not anticipate any particular feeling. One should also be aware of the state of mind in the precise moment. If there is liking or disliking, desire, anger, or doubt, these should be taken as meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*). When one sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches, or thinks, one should be aware of these sensations as they are. It is important not to reject any object that arises in consciousness; rather, one should accept any feeling, state of mind, or mental object as the foundation of awareness. As awareness develops, mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are overcome, and access concentration arises. Then, the meditator realizes that all mental and physical formations are impermanent, subject to change, and do not remain the same for even two consecutive moments. This realization is called insight. Thus, when awareness arises with insight, or Right Understanding, that awareness is also known as Right Mindfulness.

DID THE BUDDHA TEACH IN DETAIL? The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, as we have it today, lists the factors of the Noble Path only in the form of headings without any detailed elaboration of method or content. Yet, it is recounted that Venerable Koṇḍañña and others attained higher knowledge or became liberated at the end of the discourse. Therefore, the question arises, did they fully understand the meaning and method required in applying Right Mindfulness? It is certain that, if they did not have a clear comprehension of the method of application, they would not have been able to develop Right Mindfulness. In the absence of Right Mindfulness, attainment of higher knowledge of the Noble Path and fruition is impossible.

There are two plausible explanations to this puzzle. The first is that Venerable Koṇḍañña and the others were already fully ripe with uncommon, unique perfections (*pāramitās*), destined for final Liberation upon just hearing the summary of the Noble Eightfold Path. They may have applied mindfulness upon hearing the *Buddha* and accordingly attained higher knowledge and the state of Enlightenment. The second possibility is that, when the first discourse was given, the *Buddha* did, indeed, elaborate upon the headings of the Noble Eightfold Path and expound the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. At the time of reciting this discourse at the First Council, however, the Noble Eightfold Path, as such and as a component of the Four Noble Truths, was condensed in the form of headings only, since there already existed separate expositions or exegeses on them in other *suttas*. Likewise, there are still other discourses, for example, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, that seem likely to have been recited in condensed form at the First Council. At the Sixth Council, held in Myanmar (Burma) from 1954 to 1956, the missing portion of the *sutta* was filled in and recorded, based on the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Other *suttas*, in addition to the

Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, supply expositions and elaborations on the summarized headings of the Noble Eightfold Path.

NO INSIGHT WITHOUT MINDFULNESS: According to Theravādin Buddhism, mindfulness and wisdom are essential for the attainment of the final goal of Enlightenment. Moreover, it is considered essential that these be developed simultaneously. The *Buddha* taught how to cultivate mindfulness and wisdom in order to overcome suffering and realize the *Dhamma* (ultimate truth). Insight wisdom in Buddhism means understanding the *Dhamma* through personal experience, not through reasoning or intellectual intuition. The realization of the *Dhamma* is not possible without developing insight and wisdom through one of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (through mindfulness of body, feelings, state of the mind, or mental objects).

At the time of the *Buddha*, many individuals realized the *Dhamma* and became enlightened directly upon hearing the Teaching, because they had fulfilled the necessary perfections (*pāramitā*) in previous existences. Their Liberation became possible with only a few moments of mindfulness practice. What was essential was the practice of awareness of the objects and not just the mere fact of listening to the discourse. While Right Mindfulness is essential to developing the highest insight, it is not sufficient by itself. Three conditions are also necessary to achieve the goal: (1) ardor, or zeal (*ātāpa*); (2) clear comprehension (*sampajañña*); and (3) mindfulness (*sati*). Thus, one who is ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful of the object will know what causes the arising of objects and their ceasing. This is insight, knowing things as they really are (*samudaya dhammānupassī*).

Right Concentration

> *"What, O Bhikkhus, is Right Concentration? Here, in this Teaching, the Bhikkhu, being detached from all sensory desires, detached from unwholesome mental states, enters into the first stage of absorption (jhāna), which is accompanied by applied thought (vitakka) and sustained thought (vicāra), is filled with rapture (pīti) and happiness (sukha), born of detachment from unwholesome thoughts.*
>
> *"After the subsiding of applied and sustained thought, and by gaining inner tranquility and one-pointedness of the mind, he enters into a stage free from applied and sustained thought, the second absorption, which is born of concentration and filled with rapture and happiness.*
>
> *"After the fading away of rapture, he dwells in equanimity (upekkhā), attentiveness, and is clearly conscious; he experiences, in his person, that feeling of which the Noble Ones say, 'Happy is the man of equanimity and attentive mind'; thus, he enters the third absorption.*
>
> *"After the giving up of pleasure and pain, and through the disappearance of previous happiness and grief, he enters into a state beyond pleasure and pain,*

into the fourth absorption, which is purified by equanimity and one-pointedness of mind. This is Right Concentration."[524]

Here, absorption, or *jhāna*, means not allowing the mind to wander, but to have it fixed on a single object. *Jhāna* is also described as that which burns out all negative forces or hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). There are four stages of *jhāna* according to the *suttanta* method.

1. The first *jhāna* is a state of peace, rapture, and happiness, yet conceptual thought and discursive thinking (*vitakka-vicāra*), that is, the so-called "inner speech" or "verbal activity of the mind" (*vacī-saṁkhāra*), are still at work.

2. The second *jhāna* is attained as soon as this verbal activity of the mind has ceased. One then experiences a state of peace, rapture (also called "ecstasy," or "zest") (*pīti*), and happiness (*sukha*), free from conceptual thought and discursive thinking.

3. The third *jhāna* is attained upon the fading away of rapture. One then experiences "equanimous joy" or "equanimous happiness" (*upekkhā-sukha*).

4. The fourth *jhāna* is attained upon the fading away of happiness (*sukha*), leaving one in a state of perfect equanimity (*upekkhā*).

These jhānic states belong to the mundane realm known as the form (*rūpa*), or fine-material plane.[525] But, if they are accompanied by the Noble Path and fruition consciousness, they then belong to the supramundane realm. Strictly speaking, only the supramundane state of concentration, or *samādhi*, is Right Concentration. However, the mundane state of concentration is also classed as Right Concentration if it forms the basis for the development of *vipassanā* meditation.

The *Visuddhimagga* lists forty subjects for the development of concentration. Though the meditator is free to select a subject that appeals to his or her temperament, it is usually recommended that he or she start with mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). This object is called the "preliminary object," or "preliminary sign" (*parikamma-nimitta*). One should concentrate intently on this object until one becomes so wholly concentrated on it that all thoughts are excluded from the mind. This level of concentration is called "preliminary concentration" (*parikamma-samādhi*). Ultimately, a stage is reached in which one is able to visualize the object even with one's eyes closed. One concentrates continuously on this visualized image, or "acquired sign" (*uggaha-nimitta*), until it develops into a conceptualized image, or "counterpart sign" (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*). As one continues to concentrate on this abstract object, one is said to be in possession of access

[524] *Dīgha Nikāya* 22. Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta (The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness).
[525] There are four additional jhānic states. These absorptions belong to the mundane realm known as the formless (*arūpa*), or immaterial plane.

concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), and the five hindrances[526] (*nīvaraṇa*) are temporarily dispelled. Eventually, one attains absorption, or attainment, concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), that is, *jhāna*.

There are three factors of the Noble Eightfold Path that are necessary for Right Concentration, or *samādhi*. First, there is the application of effort in the practice of mindfulness in order to develop moment-to-moment awareness. Second, there is the development of one-pointedness of mind, which is the ability to fix one's awareness on any object arising at the sense doors. This is called momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*) (as distinguished from absorption concentration of jhānic states), because awareness is arising with different objects in different moments. Third, whatever object the mind concentrates on is perceived in terms of its ultimate reality as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and devoid of a self, or an essence. These factors of *samādhi* together cultivate the conditions for the realization of Noble Path and its fruition, *nibbāna*.

INSIGHT WITHOUT JHĀNA: Some have argued that *vipassanā* can only be developed after attaining *jhāna*. This, it is reasoned, is on account of the capacity of the *jhānas* to purify the mind — a requisite for the development of insight. But this position seems extreme and dogmatic, since access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) can be achieved by contemplating such objects as body postures (a practice not directed towards attaining jhānic states), while still achieving the benefits of meditative absorptions, namely, dispelling the hindrances, pacifying the mind, and developing *vipassanā*. Many individuals have achieved Arahantship with this method. Thus, the Ekadhammapāḷi Sutta[527] states that *samādhi* that is developed by the practice of the recollection of the virtues of the *Buddha*, for example, is adequate to be used as a basic meditation for the development of higher insight up to the stage of Arahantship. It is very common that rapture (*pīti*) can be aroused by just recollecting the virtues of the *Buddha* and the *Sangha*. One who meditates on the impermanence of *pīti* may subsequently attain Arahantship.

Furthermore, innumerable people at the time of the *Buddha* became liberated during the course of talks given by the *Buddha*, and many of these people were not skilled in jhānic practices. Nevertheless, they must have achieved purification of the mind, because their minds are said to have been sound (*kalla*), tender (*mudu*), free from hindrances (*vinīvaraṇa*), exultant (*udagga*), and gladdened (*pasanna*). At the moment the *Buddha* delivered the most exalted discourse on the Four Noble Truths, the audience understood and comprehended the *Dhamma*, attaining the highest state of insight and becoming liberated from the bondage of greed, hatred, and delusion.

Thus, definitions of Right Concentration given in terms of the four meditative absorptions (*jhānas*) should be regarded as an excellent method, though not an absolute requirement. Access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), although described as an inferior method, is also Right Concentration, since it accomplishes purification of mind and the

[526] The five hindrances are: (1) desire for gratification of the senses; (2) hatred, or ill will; (3) sloth and torpor; (4) restlessness and worry; and (5) skeptical doubt.
[527] *Anguttara Nikāya* I:16, Ekadhammapāḷi, 1. Paṭhamavaggo.

dispelling of hindrances just as the first *jhāna* does. It also has the same jhānic factors. In *vipassanā* meditation, awareness and concentration arise moment to moment with each object of mindfulness. This concentration is known as *vipassanā khaṇika samādhi*, or momentary concentration. It also has the same capacity to dispel hindrances in the same manner as access concentration. Therefore, both access concentration and momentary concentration should be regarded as being the same as the first *jhāna*, although as slightly weaker forms.

Jhāna means "closely observing an object with strong attention." Concentrated attention given to a selected subject of meditation, such as watching the in-breath and out-breath (*ānāpānasati*) in the case of tranquility concentration, gives rise to *samatha jhāna*, whereas watching the characteristic nature of mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*) and contemplating their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and insubstantiality brings about *vipassanā ñāṇa*.

THREEFOLD CONCENTRATION: There are three levels of concentration: (1) *appanā samādhi* (attainment concentration); (2) *upacāra samādhi* (access concentration); and (3) *khaṇika samādhi* (momentary concentration). Of these, the concentration developed by meditating on a selected object until the mind becomes absorbed onto the object is called *appanā samādhi*. The concentration that is able to dispel hindrances, but which has not yet reached the state of absorption, is called *upacāra samādhi*, neighborhood, or access, concentration. Finally, the concentration developed by observing objects and their nature of arising and passing away moment to moment is called *khaṇika samādhi*. Momentary concentration refers to the calm firm state of mind prior to access concentration. It also refers to *vipassanā samādhi*, or insight concentration. *Vipassanā samādhi* has the same capacity to dispel hindrances in the same manner as access concentration. Therefore, it can also be called "access concentration" (*upacāra samādhi*). When *vipassanā samādhi* is well developed, the mind becomes absorbed with the object, as in *jhāna*. This state of absorption can be experienced directly by those who practice mindfulness meditation. If momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*) arises without interruption, single-pointed attention (*ekaggatā*) is maintained, and negative forces, or defilements, cannot arise.

The Threefold Training

> *"There are, O Bhikkhus, three kinds of training: training in higher morality (adhisīla-sikkhā), training in higher consciousness (adhicitta-sikkhā), and training in higher wisdom (adhipaññā-sikkhā).*
>
> *"But what, O Bhikkhus, is the training in higher morality? Herein, the Bhikkhu is possessed of morality, is restrained with regard to the Bhikkhu's rules, perfect in conduct and behavior, and, abhorring the least offenses, trains himself in the moral rules he has undertaken. This is called the training in higher morality.*

> *"But what, O Bhikkhus, is training in higher consciousness? Herein, the Bhikkhu, detached from sense objects, detached from karmically unwholesome states, enters into the first ... the second ... the third ... the fourth absorption (jhāna).*
>
> *"But what, O Bhikkhus, is the training in higher wisdom? Herein, the Bhikkhu understands, according to reality, what suffering is, what the origin of suffering is, what the cessation of suffering is, and what the path is leading to the cessation of suffering."*[528]

As we have seen, the Noble Eightfold Path is a path of morality (*sīla*), of mental training (*samādhi*), and of wisdom (*paññā*).

Morality consists of Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood. Mental training consists of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. Wisdom consists of Right Understanding and Right Thought.

According to the order of development, morality (*sīla*), mental training (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are the three stages of the Path.

> *"O Bhikkhus, without having mastered the domain of morality, it is not possible to master the domain of concentration. Without having mastered the domain of concentration, it is not possible to master the domain of wisdom."*[529]

Thus, this liberating Eightfold Path is a path of inner training, of inner progress. By mere external worship, mere ceremonies and selfish prayer, one can never make any real progress in righteousness and insight. As the *Buddha* said:

> *"Be your own island of refuge, be your own shelter, do not seek after any other protection. Let the truth be your island of refuge, let the truth be your shelter, do not seek after any other protection."*[530]

MORALITY: For Buddhist monks, the training in morality consists of the observance of 227 rules,[531] while Buddhist nuns must follow an additional set of rules. The collection of these rules is called the *pātimokkha*,[532] that is, the "Code of Conduct" or "Disciplinary Rules," and is a part of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

Lay practitioners observe either five or eight rules of moral training (*sikkhāpada*), the so-called "Five Precepts" (*pañca-sīla*) or "Eight Precepts" (*aṭṭha-sīla*). In any kind of spiritual development, we need to establish our practice on moral principles so that we

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[528] *Anguttara Nikāya* 3.88, 3.89.
[529] *Anguttara Nikāya* 5.22.
[530] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* 47.13.
[531] *Sarvāstavādin* monks observed 253 disciplinary rules, and these are the rules that are currently observed by Tibetan Buddhist monks. The chief tenet of the *Sarvāstavādin* School was that past, present, and future things really exist. The Third Council, held at Patna around 250 BCE, rejected the *Sarvāstavādin* position.
[532] Sanskrit *prātimokṣa*.

feel self-respect and stability. The training rules provide a guide that we can use for behavior in our daily lives, and they provide the foundation for the practice of meditation (*bhāvanā*) and the attainment of wisdom (*paññā*).

Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*):

1. To abstain from taking life;
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given;
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct;
4. To abstain from false speech;
5. To abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.

Eight Precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla* — also called *aṭṭhanga-samannāgata uposatha*[533] or *aṭṭhangika-samannāgata uposatha* or *uposatha-sīla*):

1. To abstain from taking life;
2. To abstain from taking what is not freely given;
3. To abstain from all sexual activity;
4. To abstain from false speech;
5. To abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness;
6. To abstain from eating any solid food after noon;
7. To abstain from dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows; from the use of garlands, perfumes, and unguents; and from things that tend to beautify and adorn;
8. To abstain from high and luxurious beds and seats.

The purpose of moral training is to bring physical and verbal action under control.

> *"Now, I will tell you of the rules of conduct for a householder, acting according to which, one becomes a good disciple. If there is monk-duty to be performed, such duty cannot be fulfilled by one who possesses household property.*
>
> *"Let one not destroy life nor cause others to destroy life and, also, not approve of others' killing. Let one refrain from oppressing all living beings in the world, whether strong or weak.*

[533] *Uposatha*, literally "fasting," that is, "fasting day," is the full-moon day, the new-moon day, and the two days on the first and last quarters of the moon. On full-moon and new-moon days, the Disciplinary Code, the *pātimokkha*, is read before the assembled community of monks (*Bhikkhus*), while on the mentioned four moon-days, many of the faithful lay practitioners go to visit the monasteries and there take upon themselves the observance of the Eight Precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 219.

"Then, because the disciple knows that it belongs to others, stealing anything from any place should be avoided. Let one not cause to steal, nor approve of others' stealing. All stealing should be avoided.

"One who is wise should avoid non-celibate life as if it were a burning charcoal pit. If one is unable to lead a celibate life fully, let one not transgress with another's spouse.

"Whether one is in an assembly or in a public place, let one not tell lies to another. Let one not cause others to tell lies nor approve of others' telling lies.

"The householder who delights in self-control, knowing that taking intoxicants results in its loss, should not indulge in taking intoxicants, nor should one cause others to take them nor approve of others doing so. Fools commit evil deeds as a result of drunkenness and cause other people, who are negligent, to act accordingly. One should avoid this sphere of evil deeds, this madness, this delusion, this delight of fools.

"(1) One should not destroy life; (2) should not take that which is not given; (3) should not tell lies; (4) should not be a drinker; (5) should refrain from all unchastity; (6) should not eat untimely food at night; (7) should not wear ornaments nor use perfumes; (8) should lie on a mat spread on the ground. This, they call the eightfold sacred observance proclaimed by the Buddha, who came to do away with sorrow. Being happy-minded, one should observe this virtue of eight precepts on the fourteenth (or fifteenth) and eighth days of the lunar fortnight [and during the three rainy months (Pāṭihāriyapakkha) together with those preceding and following this season, five months in all]. Then, on the following morning, the wise one who has observed eight precepts should happily provide the Community of Monks with food and drink in a suitable manner.

"Let one support one's father and mother in a proper manner and also pursue a blameless career. The householder observing these duties with diligence is reborn in the sphere of 'self-luminant' beings."[534]

1. The *first precept*,[535] to abstain from taking life, involves non-violence, non-killing. As we become more developed in the spiritual life, we realize the need to live so that we are not creating violence around us. The more considerate, compassionate, and loving we are towards other beings, both human and non-human, the more we

[534] *Sutta Nipāta*, Cūḷa Vagga, Dhammika Sutta, no. 14.

[535] The description of the precepts presented here is adapted from Chapter 13 of *The Mind and the Way: Buddhist Reflections on Life*, by Ajahn Sumedho (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1995]). Portions are also adapted from "Day One: Evening Discourse" of *Knowing Anicca and the Way to Nibbāna*, by Saya U Chit Tin (Trowbridge, Wiltshire: The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, U.K. [1989]); from *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha: The Jātaka Stories in Relation to the Pāḷi Canon*, by John Garrett Jones (London: George Allen & Unwwin [1979]); from *Swallowing the River Ganges: A Practical Guide to the Path of Purification*, by Matthew Flickstein (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2001]); and from "Sīla in Modern Life" by Francis Story, published in *The Buddhist Outlook: Essays, Dialogues, Poems. Collected Writings, Vol. I* (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1973]), pp. 170—195.

develop our own sense of self-respect, and the more we feel a sense of inner peace and calm.

Thus, training in the first precept means refraining from thoughts, speech, or actions that are violent or harmful both to ourselves and to other beings. It means respecting all living beings and relating to them in a more sensitive, accepting, and open way.

Let us look at refraining from killing in a little more detail to help us understand better what is involved. What constitutes killing a sentient being? First of all, it must be a sentient being. One must know it is a sentient being, and one must intend to kill it. Then, one must make an effort to kill it. That includes taking action oneself as well as encouraging someone else to do it. And, finally, the being must be killed. So, we can see how important the mental factor is. If we accidentally step on an insect in the garden, we need not feel guilty about that. But any conscious or intentional killing, ranging from killing the eggs of lice or bugs or causing abortion or the slaughter of any living creature, including human beings, is wrong action.

Let us now examine a practice common in society these days. There is a current belief that it is morally justifiable, and even a duty, to put an animal painlessly to death when it is incurably sick or injured. To those who believe in "mercy-killing," it may appear strange that this is not approved by Buddhism. There are two reasons why Buddhism does not countenance this practice. The first is that every living being has the results of its own past *kamma* to work out, and that any interference with this will not be anything more than a temporary alleviation of the suffering it is due to endure. This suffering is a strictly defined quantity, determined by the gravity of the misdeeds in the previous life that have produced it. The killing of a suffering animal before the full results of its past *kamma* are exhausted does not bring the suffering to an end. It will continue to suffer in subsequent lives until the full karmic debt has been paid. This will be best understood in the light of the Western difference of opinion concerning euthanasia, the co-called "mercy-killing," by consent of human beings. Materialists who have no belief in the connection between suffering and moral values maintain that a human being beyond hope of recovery from a painful disease should be allowed to take advantage of the same "merciful release" that is granted to an animal. Those who take the religious view, on the other hand, although they may not understand the karmic working of cause and effect, yet hold that human suffering has some spiritual significance and that, while it is necessary to relieve it as far as possible, it is not in accordance with the belief in the "sacredness of life" to put an end to that suffering until death comes naturally. Buddhism applies the same principle to the case of animals, with even greater force, since, in Buddhism, the nature of suffering, its cause, and its remedy, are fully explained by the law of *kamma* and its result (*vipāka*).

The second reason for condemning the mistaken notion of "mercy-killing" concerns the doer of the deed. No killing can be merciful in the true sense of the word, because *Abhidhamma* ethico-psychology shows plainly that every act of

killing, whatever may be its ostensible motive, must be accompanied by the arising of hatred in the mind. In "mercy-killing," this hatred takes the form of repugnance towards the suffering that is being witnessed. This hatred, the most karmically unwholesome mental factor that can be generated, is momentarily turned towards the suffering creature. What happens in this case is that the "mercy-killer" hates the suffering creature because it unpleasantly reminds him of the pain in the world and his own susceptibility to it. He transfers his hatred of the suffering to the animal that is suffering. He disguises his real feeling as a morally praiseworthy action, and so rationalizes and justifies it to himself. If he understood his own psychology better, he would, at once, recognize the hidden hatred (*dosa*) that arises in his mind at the moment of performing the lethal deed, and he would not deceive himself, as he does, with the belief that he is motivated by compassion.

Finally, it may be noted that Buddhism does not condone the use of abortion as a means of birth control, but it does support the use of contraceptives.

2. The *second precept* is refraining from taking what has not been freely given. Obviously, this precept refers to refraining from overt stealing and robbing, but, in a more refined sense, this precept also refers to respecting the property of others. It means that we do not waste time coveting what other people have. Now, it is difficult not to want more, not to covet what others have in a society that is constantly bombarding us with messages of more, more, more. But this is not the way to develop the spiritual life. So, by following the second precept, we do not take what does not belong to us, we respect what others have without coveting it, and we lessen our own wants.

   Refraining from taking what is not freely given means abstaining from taking, with the intention to steal, animate or inanimate property that belongs to someone — removing, or appropriating such property without the owner's consent, whether by one's own physical effort or by inciting someone else to do so.

   There are many ways of committing theft besides the crude and obvious methods of stealing and robbery. Many of them, unfortunately, are not only rampant today but are so skillfully disguised that they go uncensored, or are even rewarded. The man who makes a fortune in business by dishonest deals, creating artificial shortages, exploiting his employees, or ruthlessly driving his competitors out of business is not branded as a thief; yet, the fact remains that his prosperity is grounded on the losses of others. Such a man is frequently honored for his position in commerce or industry. But, although the world, with its false standard of values, may admire and praise him, he is merely a thief of a different kind.

   Moreover, it is not only the unscrupulous business man who is guilty. Employees who, while being paid a fair wage, shirk their duties, waste their employer's time or create disaffection among their co-workers are also thieves. Government employees and people in high positions who accept bribes, or in any other way trade on their influence instead of discharging their duties justly and with impartiality, are also guilty of taking that which is not rightly theirs. All these are

forms of disguised theft, yet, while everyone condemns the common thief, these privileged offenders are accepted by society and are oftentimes considered to be respectable persons. In the light of Buddhist moral doctrine, however, their *kamma* is no different from that of the man who breaks into a house in the dead of night and robs the householder of his cash and jewelry.

The ordinary thief is a man who goes in constant fear of discovery. When he is exposed, as sooner or later he is certain to be, he is branded as a thief, and his shame is seen by all. With his reputation lost beyond recovery, he is fortunate, indeed, if he is ever able to live down his past in this present life. Few people will trust him, and fewer still will be willing to give him employment or even associate with him. Thus, he brings about his own ruin in this very life.

Yet, there are people of such perverted views that they actually pride themselves on their cleverness in taking what does not belong to them. Even when they are caught, they brazen their way through the situation. It is a disquieting fact that people with this distorted moral outlook seem to be on the increase. There is a tendency today to romanticize the criminal and to make a hero of the man who prides himself on having no regard for the rights of others. There is a widespread cult of thievery, as there is of violence, and it has become a very pressing social problem. The worldwide financial crisis of 2008—2009, driven by corporate and individual greed, is a glaring example of the magnitude of this problem.

3. The *third precept* is refraining from sexual misconduct. Refraining from sexual misconduct means avoiding any sexual act that would cause pain or suffering to oneself or to others. Adultery, for example, causes the disruption of marriages. In addition to adultery, sexual misconduct includes rape, seduction, and other obviously inappropriate sexual behaviors, such as sexual relations with minors (either male or female) under the guardianship of their father, mother, or someone else taking responsibility for them. It is also improper to have sexual relations with someone who has taken vows of celibacy, or, for those who are married or in a committed relationship, with any person other than one's husband or wife or partner. On a more subtle level, we need to avoid any activities in which we relate to others as objects of sexual desire — such as watching pornography, talking about our physical attraction to others, and making sexual innuendoes through our words or actions — or that would cause discomfort to others.[536]

[536] In Tibetan Buddhism, the restrictions on lay sexual behavior are more elaborate. A detailed text on the subject by the famous fifteenth century Tibetan monk-scholar Tsongkhapa (1357—1419 CE) identifies inappropriate partners, organs, times, and places. Inappropriate partners include all "protected women" (such as married women or girls under the protection of their parents). Inappropriate partners also include boys, men, and hermaphrodites. The list of inappropriate partners, however, explicitly excludes prostitutes, or courtesans, at least so long as they are hired directly and not through an intermediary. Inappropriate organs refers to the mouth, anus, hands, and between the thighs of one's partner, by which is meant insertion of the penis into any orifice or fold in the skin other than the vagina. Inappropriate times refers both to the daylight hours and to specific times in the life of one's female partner, such as when she is menstruating, breastfeeding, or has taken one-day precepts. Finally, inappropriate places includes sacred

Consideration in regard to our intimate relationships also pertains to less obvious forms of sexual misbehavior. For example, if one person in a relationship is not inclined toward sexual intimacy, his or her spouse or partner needs to respect those wishes and act accordingly. Conversely, attempts to coerce one's spouse or partner to be intimate or to use intimacy as a bargaining chip or as a means to manipulate, control, or punish one's partner demonstrates a lack of consideration and is regarded as a breach of this precept.

Buddhist monks and nuns live in strictly segregated communities and are required to refrain from any expression of sexual desire and from all sexual activity. They are also required to act very circumspectly whenever they are in contact with members of the opposite sex. In joining the Order of Monks or Nuns, they have made a conscious decision to make a maximum effort to attain Liberation, and many of the rules, as well as the organization of the Orders, help monks and nuns avoid unnecessary stimulation of sensual desires. A man or a woman who is incapable of restraint is encouraged to leave the Orders and become a lay practitioner again, with no stigma attached, and they are free also to return to the Orders.

Buddhism condemns neither premarital sex nor homosexuality. There is no direct reference to homosexuality in the first four *Nikāyas*, and the *Buddha* never spoke against this kind of emotion or activity. An indirect reference may occur in a single passage in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, where monks are counseled against being overly devoted to one person. If a monk says to another monk "he is dear and lovely to me," he is likely to be adversely affected should the beloved companion fall into error, go elsewhere, become ill, or die. The *Jātaka* Tales, on the other hand, contain several accounts of loving relationships of this kind.

It should also be noted that Buddhism does not condemn polygamy, which was widely practiced at the time of the *Buddha*. Consequently, this precept should not be interpreted in the Western sense of "one man, one woman." Indeed, if "sexual misconduct" is interpreted to mean having more than one wife, it is certainly a misunderstanding of the term. What is condemned is taking sexual pleasure with a woman who stands in a relationship, even if only temporary, with another man.

According to Buddhism, sexual passion is detrimental to spiritual progress. However, Buddhism does not make any artificial distinctions, as does Western sexual morality, between different forms of sexual desire. From a Buddhist point of

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sites and public places. Also included is the number of times that orgasm is permitted (five). The original teachings, as preserved, for example, in the Theravādin tradition, contain no such restrictions. The early doctrine on what constitutes sexual misconduct is simple and elegant in comparison. The more complex and restrictive formulation found in Tibetan Buddhism is a later innovation. There are no examples of the more elaborate formulation of sexual misconduct before the third century CE. It was only then that authors such as Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, and others began to formulate the more elaborate lay sexual ethics. They formulated these ethics on the basis of the rules found in the monastic code. The result was to make lay sexuality increasingly more restrictive and monastic-like. In so doing, they lost sight of the original purpose of the doctrine, which was twofold: (1) to refrain from actions that are harmful to oneself and (2) to refrain from actions that are harmful to others. Cf. José Ignacio Cabezón, "Rethinking Buddhism and Sex," *Buddhadharma: The Practitioner's Quarterly*, Summer 2009, pp. 60—68.

view, all forms of sexual desire are equally detrimental. But the Buddhist solution to the problem does not involve suppressing the sexual instinct, and it is certainly not to be dealt with by making arbitrary laws limiting the number of wives a man may have or the number of husbands a woman may have, nor by unofficially approving of one standard of morality for one sex and condemning it in the other sex, as is done in the West. Western repressive measures against sex have so far been successful only in one thing — producing feelings of shame or guilt in matters relating to sex and marriage. This is cruelty masquerading as morality. The Buddhist method of dealing with the issue is not legalistic, but therapeutic. Sexual craving, like any other craving, is to be eradicated not by suppression but by gradually removing its root. The practice of meditation directed towards the impurities of the body, the transience of physical beauty, and the painful nature of the passion that sexual desire engenders, is a form of mental therapy that weakens sexual attraction and, in the end, re-orients the mind away from sexual desire. It is a process of gradual cleansing of the mind that is fully in accordance with natural psychological processes.

4. The *fourth precept* is abstaining from wrong speech. This precept requires abstaining from false speech, vulgar speech, sarcasm, gossip, idle chatter, and all heedless ways in which we can use speech.

   Right Speech means speech that is truthful, beneficial, and neither foul nor malicious. Right Speech can be divided into four parts:

   1. Refraining from telling lies;
   2. Refraining from back-biting and slander or false accusation;
   3. Refraining from using abusive language, harsh words, and speech that is harmful to others;
   4. Refraining from frivolous talk, such as telling tales or any other type of useless speech.

   Specifically, Right Speech means cultivating the following types of speech:

   1. Talk about desiring little;
   2. Talk about Contentment;
   3. Talk about Solitude, which can be physical or mental solitude and the highest solitude, *nibbāna*;
   4. Talk about remaining aloof, which includes talk about abstaining from activities that might arouse sexual desire;
   5. Talk about making Right Effort (*sammā vāyāma*);
   6. Talk about Morality (*sīla*);
   7. Talk about Concentration (*samādhi*);
   8. Talk about Wisdom (*paññā*);
   9. Talk about Deliverance (*vimutti*);
   10. Talk about Knowledge and Vision of Deliverance, meaning Retrospective

Knowledge; Retrospective Knowledge comes just after attaining an absorption state or one of the paths or fruition states in the four stages of Awakening.

It is actually quite difficult to practice this precept, because our society involves us in so many negative speech habits. It is socially acceptable to talk about what other people are doing, to chit-chat, to exaggerate, and to chatter endlessly just to break the silence. We can also be very cruel with our speech. If we are developing a spiritual life, we have to be very careful about what we say to others or about others so that we are not intentionally causing them pain. It is inevitable that we will sometimes say things that upset people — we cannot help that. But our intention should be to refrain from speaking with malicious intent. We should take responsibility for what we say, for how we speak, and for the suggestions we give to others.

5. The *fifth precept* is about abstaining from drinking alcoholic beverages and using drugs. This precept is important, because, for our spiritual growth, we are trying to develop a consciousness that is clear and focused. This cannot happen when we are being influenced by alcohol or drugs.

   When we meditate, we start from where we are now. We do not take drugs in order to feel at one with the universe. The way to insight, unity, and oneness is not through drugs, but through Right Understanding, that is, through seeing things as they really are.

In addition, one should avoid gambling with cards, dice, and so forth as well as other addictive or compulsive behaviors.

The Five Precepts provide the moral foundation for our practice. They need to be reaffirmed daily and made an integral part of our lives. That is to say that we must make a constant effort — we must keep reminding ourselves — to refrain from unwholesome thoughts, speech, and actions and to nurture and perform wholesome thoughts, speech, and actions until they become second nature to us.

The *Buddha's* fundamental moral teachings are of universal applicability and belong to a timeless order of ethical principles. The Five Precepts, which the *Buddha* laid down as necessary in His own day, are no less necessary today, and they require no modification to bring them into line with our own needs.

In all of this, mindfulness (*sati*) is the key for *knowing* what we are thinking, saying, or doing, and is, thus, the starting point. Mindfulness is the tool for *shaping* the mind, and is, thus, the focal point. Finally, mindfulness is the manifestation of the achieved *freedom* of the mind, and is, thus, the culminating point. Learning to control attention is the key to gaining access to the vital energy that drives the whole organism we call our self and to using that energy wisely. No skill in living is more useful.

MEDITATION: In Buddhism, there are two types of meditation:[537] *samatha*, or Tranquility Meditation, and *vipassanā*, or Insight Meditation. Concentration involves the mind resting one-pointedly on an object so that the mind becomes stable and calm. The purpose of developing one-pointed attention is to slow down the flow of thoughts. The mind cannot focus on something when it is distracted by thoughts, that is, when it is swept away by or attached to thoughts. It is this inner noise that is the shield that prevents us from knowing our highest self. In tranquility meditation, the mind is focused one-pointedly without being distracted. If we can focus the mind one-pointedly without being distracted, we have achieved *samatha*. Thus, *samatha* is not a state of "no thought" but, rather, a state of "non-distraction." When we develop one-pointed concentration, the mind becomes so relaxed that it rests in itself, just as it is, undistracted by thoughts.

When the mind becomes very calm and stable, it can distinguish and discriminate very clearly between all phenomena and see everything as very distinct. This ability to see all things clearly, just as they are, is called "insight" (*vipassanā*).

WISDOM: Wisdom (*paññā*) is the understanding, through personal experience, of the true nature of all conditioned phenomena, that is, impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and absence of a permanent entity such as a soul or self (*anattā*). Wisdom is achieved through insight, or *vipassanā*, meditation. In insight meditation, the mind is set to a perfect state of balance, and, then, the attention is projected to the changing nature or the unsatisfactory nature or the impersonal nature of physical and mental phenomena. It is not a mere intellectual appreciation or conceptual knowledge of these truths, but an indubitable and unshakable personal experience of them, obtained and matured through repeated meditative confrontation with the facts underlying those truths. It is the intrinsic nature of insight that it produces a growing detachment and an increasing freedom from craving (*taṇhā*), culminating in the final Deliverance of the mind from all that causes its enslavement to the world of suffering. It is the nature of insight to be free from desire, aversion, and delusion and to see clearly all things in the inner and outer world as bare phenomena, that is, as impersonal processes.

External Rites and Rituals

According to the *Buddha's* Teaching, belief in the moral efficacy of mere external rites and rituals constitutes a great obstacle to inner progress. One who takes refuge in

[537] The most detailed discussion of Theravādin meditation techniques is Paravahera Vajirañāṇa Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice: A General Exposition According to the Pāḷi Canon of the Theravāda School* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society [second edition 1975]). Also of value are: Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc. [1965]); Mahāthera Henepola Gunaratana, *Mindfulness in Plain English* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [twentieth anniversary edition 2011]); Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Mindfulness with Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1997]); Ñāṇamoli Thera, *Mindfulness of Breathing. Ānāpānasati. Buddhist Texts from the Pāḷi Canon and from the Pāḷi Commentaries* (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1982]).

mere external practices is on the wrong path. For, in order to achieve real inner progress, all our efforts must necessarily be based on our own understanding and insight. Any real progress is rooted in Right Understanding, and, without Right Understanding, there will be no attainment of unshakable peace and holiness. Moreover, this blind belief in mere external practices is the cause of much misery and wretchedness in the world. It leads to mental stagnation, to fanaticism and intolerance, to self-exaltation and contempt for others, to contention, discord, war, strife, and bloodshed, as the history of the Middle Ages in Europe or even the religious extremism of our own times quite sufficiently testify. This belief in mere external practices dulls and deadens one's power of thought and stifles every higher emotion in man. It makes him a mental slave and favors the growth of all kinds of hypocrisy.

The *Buddha* has clearly and positively expressed Himself on this point. He says:

> *"The man enmeshed in delusion will never be purified through the mere study of holy books, nor sacrifices to gods, nor fasts, nor sleeping on the ground, nor difficult and strenuous vigils, nor the repetition of prayers. Neither gifts to priests, nor self-castigation, nor performance of rites and ceremonies can bring about purification in one who is filled with craving. It is not through the partaking of meat or fish that man becomes impure but through drunkenness, obstinacy, bigotry, deceit, envy, self-exaltation, disparagement of others, and evil intentions — through these things, man becomes impure.*
>
> *"There are two extremes: addiction to sensual enjoyment and addiction to bodily mortification. The Perfect One has rejected these two extremes and has discovered the Middle Path that makes one both see and know. It is this Middle Path which leads to Peace, Penetration, Enlightenment, and Liberation — this Middle Path is, indeed, that Noble Eightfold Path leading to the end of suffering, namely, Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration of Mind."*

Dogmatism and Blind Faith

Inasmuch as the *Buddha* teaches that all genuine progress on the path of virtue is necessarily dependent upon one's own understanding and insight, all dogmatism is excluded from the *Buddha's* Teaching. Blind faith in authority is rejected by the *Buddha* and is entirely opposed to the spirit of His Teaching.

One who merely believes or repeats what others have found out is compared by the *Buddha* to a blind man. One who desires to make progress upon the Path of Deliverance must experience and understand the truth for himself. Lacking one's own understanding, no absolute progress is possible.

The Teaching of the *Buddha* is perhaps the only religious teaching that requires no belief in traditions nor in certain historical events. It appeals solely to the understanding of each individual. For, wherever there are beings capable of thinking,

there, the truths proclaimed by the *Buddha* may be understood and realized, without regard to race, country, nationality, or position in society. These truths are universal, not bound up with any particular country or any particular epoch. And, in everyone, even in the lowliest, there lies latent the capacity for seeing and realizing these truths and attaining to the Highest Perfection. And, whosoever lives a noble life, such a one has already tasted the truth and, in greater or lesser degree, travels on the Eightfold Path of Peace, which all noble and holy ones have trodden, tread now, and shall tread in the future. The universal laws of morality hold good without variation everywhere and in all times, whether one may call oneself a Buddhist, Hindu, Jew, Christian, Moslem, Sikh, Bahá'í, Atheist, Agnostic, or by any other name.

It is the inward condition of a person and his deeds that count, not a mere name. The true disciple of the *Buddha* is far removed from all dogmatism. He is a free thinker in the noblest sense of the word. He falls neither into positive nor negative dogmas, for he knows: both are mere opinions, mere views, rooted in blindness and self-deception. Therefore, the *Buddha* has said of himself:

> *"The Perfect One is free from any theory, for the Perfect One has seen: thus is corporeality, thus it arises, thus it passes away; thus is feeling, thus it arises, thus it passes away; thus is perception, thus it arises, thus it passes away; thus are the mental formations, thus they arise, thus they pass away; thus is consciousness, thus it arises, thus it passes away."*

The Four Stages of Sainthood[538]

Between the states of delusion, bondage, and suffering and that of complete release lie the Paths and Fruits of Attainment, marked by the progressive elimination of ten Fetters (*saṁyojana*), that is, ten mental obstructions that stand in the way of self-purification and that bind us to the wheel of existence (*saṁsāra*):

1. Personality belief — the delusion of "selfhood" (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*);
2. Skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*);
3. Attachment to rites and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*);
4. Desire for gratification of the senses (*kāma-rāga*);
5. Ill-will (*vyāpāda*);
6. Craving for fine-material existence (*rūpa-rāga*);
7. Craving for immaterial existence (*arūpa-rāga*);
8. Conceit (*māna*);
9. Restlessness (*uddhacca*);
10. Ignorance (*avijjā*).

[538] This section is adapted, in part, from Francis Story, *Dimensions of Buddhist Thought: Collected Essays* (Kandy: Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1985]), pp. 122—123.

The first five of these are called "lower fetters" (*orambhāgiya-saṁyojana*), inasmuch as they bind to the sensory world. The remaining five of these are called "higher fetters" (*uddhambhāgiya-saṁyojana*), inasmuch as they bind to the "higher worlds," that is, the fine-material and immaterial worlds.

One who has put an end to the first three Fetters is known as a Stream-Winner, or Stream-Enterer (*Sotāpanna*); he has entered the stream of Liberation, and his destiny has become fixed. He cannot be born in any sphere lower than the human, and, if he does not attain full Liberation earlier, he is bound to do so within the course of seven lives, at the most. One who has reached this stage becomes incapable of committing any of the unwholesome deeds that lead to rebirth in sub-human realms of suffering. When, in addition, the next two Fetters are weakened, he becomes a Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmī*), who will not have to endure more than one rebirth in the sensory spheres, which means that, if he fails to reach *nibbāna* in the current life, he is bound to do so in the next birth. When all of the first five Fetters, which are known as the "lower fetters," are completely destroyed, he becomes a Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*), who will not be born again in the sensory spheres — if he does not gain *nibbāna* before he dies, he will reach it in the next birth, which takes place in the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāsa*). There, he attains Arahantship and passes straight to *nibbāna* without returning to the sensory planes. When all ten Fetters are destroyed, he attains the state of *Arahant*. He has then realized the Paths and Fruits of the Holy Life, and, for him, the painful round of rebirth has come to an end. These four stages of Sainthood (*ariya-puggala*) are sometimes separated by intervals, sometimes they follow immediately after one another, but, at each stage, the "Fruit," or "Attainment," follows instantly upon the realization of the Path in the series of thought-moments. When the thought-moment of insight flashes forth, the meditator knows, beyond all doubt, the nature of his Attainment and what, if anything, still needs to be accomplished.

When, by the total eradication of lust (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*), the *Arahant* gains *nibbāna*, he obtains with it the type of Enlightenment, known as the Disciple's Enlightenment (*sāvaka-bodhi*), that goes with his Attainment. That is, he fully understands the causes of existence and how they have been counteracted, and he experiences an extension of his faculties as a consequence of the breaking down of the delusion of selfhood, which normally acts as a barrier to the mind, isolating it in the personal realm of sensory experience. But the Enlightenment of a Supreme *Buddha* is of a higher order and of an illimitable range. Over and above the knowledge pertaining to Arahantship, a *Buddha* acquires the perfect understanding of all things. This he gains as the result of his determination, formed in a previous life and realized through the cultivation of transcendent virtue, to become a Fully Enlightened One, a World Teacher for the welfare of all beings; for, without that completeness of knowledge, he could not set in motion the Wheel of the *Dhamma*. But, by the nature of things, the greater part of his knowledge is not communicable to others. Nor is there a need to communicate it. In speaking of natural phenomena, the *Buddha* used the language and ideas of those whom He was addressing, and to whom any other ideas would have appeared bizarre and incredible. One does not speak of the general theory of relativity to a person who can

barely understand Euclid. When He was questioned about whether He taught His disciples all that He knew, the *Buddha* replied with a simile. Placing a pinch of dust on His fingernail, He asked which was greater, the pinch of dust He was holding or the remainder of dust on the ground. The obvious answer was given, whereupon He said: "In like manner, the knowledge of the *Tathāgata* is much greater than that which He has taught."

From this, attempts have been made to prove that the *Buddha* had an esoteric teaching that He reserved for a select body of disciples. But the meaning is made clear by the following: "Nevertheless, everything necessary for complete Liberation has been taught by the *Tathāgata*." And again: "The *Tathāgata* has taught the *Dhamma* without making any distinctions of esoteric and exoteric doctrine. The *Tathāgata* does not have the closed fist of a teacher who keeps some things back." The things the *Buddha* knew but did not teach were those that did not lead to Liberation and, therefore, had no bearing on the task of guiding others across the ocean of *saṁsāra*.

The *Buddha* did not encourage metaphysical speculation. He did not offer theories: "The *Tathāgata* holds no theories" is a phrase that occurs frequently in the scriptures. Having "seen the truth face to face," He has discarded views based on mere reasoning and imperfect knowledge. Reason is a good guide — none is better so far as it goes —, and certainly nothing that is contrary to reason should be accepted as true; but the point of departure for the ultimate destination is where unaided reason can carry us no farther. It is there that the Higher Mind (*adhicitta*) takes over and completes the journey. Until such time as it is allowed to do so, the analytical processes of the discriminating, conceptual mind remain to some extent a hindrance. ■

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23

Kamma[539]

"All living beings have kamma as their own."[540]

Inequality among Mankind

Kamma[541] is the law of moral causation. Rebirth is its corollary. *Kamma* and Rebirth are interrelated, fundamental doctrines of Buddhism.

These two doctrines were prevalent in India before the advent of the *Buddha*. Nevertheless, it was the *Buddha* who explained and formulated them in the completeness in which we have them today.

When beholding this world and thinking about the destinies of different beings, it will appear to most people as if everything in nature were unjust. What is the cause of the inequality that exists among mankind? How do we account for the unevenness in this ill-balanced world?

Why should one be brought up in the lap of luxury, endowed with excellent mental, moral, and physical qualities, and another in absolute poverty, in abject misery? Why should one be born a millionaire and another a pauper? Why should one be a mental prodigy and another an idiot? Why should one be born with saintly characteristics and another with criminal tendencies? Why should some be linguists, artists, musicians, and mathematicians from the very cradle? Why should others be congenitally blind, deaf, and deformed? Why should some be blessed and others cursed from their birth? Why is one person rich and powerful, but another person poor and distressed? Why is one person well and healthy all his life, but another person sickly or infirm from his very birth? Why is one person endowed with attractive appearance, intelligence, and perfect sense, while another person is repulsive and ugly, an idiot, blind, or deaf and dumb? Why is one child born amid utter misery and among wretched people and brought up as a criminal, while another child is born in the midst of plenty and comfort, of noble-minded parents, and enjoys all the advantages of kindly treatment and the best mental and moral

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[539] Parts this chapter are adapted from a lecture given at Ceylon University, Śri Lanka (Ceylon), in 1947 by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera entitled "Kamma and Rebirth" and published as part of *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures* (= The Wheel Publication, no. 394/396) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1994]), pp. 14—31.

[540] *Majjhima Nikāya*.

[541] Sanskrit *karma*.

education, and sees nothing but good things all around? Why does one person, often without the slightest effort, succeed in all his enterprises, while, to another person, all his plans fail? Why is one person happy, but another person unhappy? Why does one person enjoy long life, while another person is carried away by death in the prime of life? Why is this so? Why do such differences exist in nature?

Either there is a definite cause for this inequality, or there is not. If there is not, the inequality is purely accidental.

No sensible person would think of attributing this inequality to blind chance or pure accident.

In this world, nothing happens to any person that he does not for some reason or other deserve. Usually, the actual reason or reasons cannot be comprehended by men of ordinary intellect. The definite invisible cause or causes of the visible effect may not necessarily be confined to the present life but could be traced to a proximate or remote past birth. With the aid of telesthesia and retrocognitive knowledge, may it not be possible for a highly developed seer to perceive events which are ordinarily imperceptible to the physical eye? Buddhists affirm such a possibility.

The majority of mankind attributes this inequality to a single cause such as the will of a Creator. The *Buddha* explicitly denies the existence of a Creator as an Almighty Being or as a causeless cosmic force.

Now, how do modern scientists account for the inequality of mankind? Confining themselves purely to sense-data, they attribute this inequality to chemico-physical causes, heredity, and the environment.

One must admit that all such chemico-physical phenomena, revealed by scientists, are partly instrumental, but could they be solely responsible for the subtle distinctions that exist among individuals? Yet, why should identical twins, who are physically alike, inheriting like genes, enjoying the same privileges of upbringing, be temperamentally, intellectually, and morally totally different?

Heredity alone cannot account for these vast differences. Strictly speaking, it accounts more plausibly for some of the similarities than for most of the differences.

The infinitesimally minute chemico-physical germ, which is supposed to be about 30 millionth part of an inch across, inherited from parents, explains only a portion of man, his physical foundation. To explain the more complex and subtle mental, intellectual, and moral differences, we need more. The theory of heredity cannot satisfactorily account for the birth of a criminal in a long line of honorable ancestors, for the birth of a saint in a family of evil repute, for the arising of infant prodigies, men of genius, and great spiritual teachers.

Christianity does not provide us with any reasonable answer to these questions nor does it even try to find an explanation for them. Quite to the contrary! Take, for example, the poor, wretched child, born in misery and among criminals, and actually trained to become a criminal. Under such circumstances, and without the slightest moral advice, will such a person ever be able to distinguish between moral and immoral, between crime and virtue? No, under such conditions, the only way open for him is to become a criminal. And, of such a poor and pitiable person, Christianity says — apart

from his present misery and suffering — that he is destined to eternal punishment in hell after death. Could there be found, in this world, anything more unjust and cruel than this kind of thinking? It is really the worst form of fatalism and injustice! For, how could a person, under those conditions, ever be made responsible for his deeds? Now, as to the question of why such differences exist in the destiny of different beings, this question is satisfactorily answered solely by Buddhism.

According to Buddhism, this inequality is due not only to heredity and the environment, so-called "nature and nurture," but also to the operation of the law of *kamma*, in other words, to the result of our own inherited past actions and our present doings. We ourselves are responsible for our own happiness and misery. We create our own heaven, and we create our own hell. We are the architects of our own fate.

The Causes of Inequality

Perplexed by the seemingly inexplicable, apparent disparity that exists among humanity, a young truth-seeker named Subha approached the *Buddha* and questioned Him regarding it:[542]

> *"What is the reason, what is the cause, O Lord, that we find among mankind the short-lived and the long-lived, the diseased and the healthy, the powerless and the powerful, the poor and the rich, the low-born and the high-born, the ignorant and the wise?"*

The *Buddha's* reply was:

> *"All living beings have actions*[543] *as their own inheritance, their congenital cause, their kinsman, their refuge. It is kamma that differentiates beings into low and high states."*

He then explained the causes of such differences in accordance with the law of cause and effect:

> *"If a person destroys life, is a hunter, besmears his hand with blood, is engaged in killing and wounding, and is not merciful towards living beings, he, as a result of his killing, when born among mankind, will be short-lived.*
>
> *"If a person avoids killing, leaves aside cudgel and weapon, and is merciful and compassionate towards all living beings, he, as a result of his non-killing, when born among mankind, will be long-lived.*

[542] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Vibhangavagga, Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta, no. 135.
[543] That is, *kamma*.

"If a person is in the habit of harming others with fist or clod, with cudgel or sword, he, as a result of his harmfulness, when born among mankind, will suffer from various diseases.

"If a person is not in the habit of harming others, he, as a result of his harmlessness, when born among mankind, will enjoy good health.

"If a person is wrathful and turbulent, is irritated by trivial words, gives vent to anger, ill will, and resentment, he, as a result of his irritability, when born among mankind, will become ugly.

"If a person is not wrathful and turbulent, is not irritated even by a torrent of abuse, does not give vent to anger, ill will, and resentment, he, as a result of his amiability, when born among mankind, will become beautiful.

"If a person is jealous, envies the gains of others, marks of respect, and honors shown to others, stores jealousy in his heart, he, as a result of his jealousy, when born among mankind, will be powerless.

"If a person is not jealous, does not envy the gains of others, marks of respect, and honors shown to others, does not store jealousy in his heart, he, as a result of his absence of jealousy, when born among mankind, will be powerful.

"If a person does not give anything to charity, he, as a result of his greediness, when born among mankind, will be poor.

"If a person is bent on charitable giving, he, as a result of his generosity, when born among mankind, will be rich.

"If a person is stubborn, haughty, does not honor those who are worthy of honor, he, as a result of his arrogance and irreverence, when born among mankind, will be of low birth.

"If a person is not stubborn, not haughty, honors those who are worthy of honor, he, as a result of his humility and deference, when born among mankind, will be of high birth.

"If a person does not approach the learned and the virtuous and inquire what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong, what should be practiced and what should not be practiced, what should be done and what should not be done, what conduces to one's welfare and what to one's ruin, he, as a result of his non-inquiring spirit, when born among mankind, will be ignorant.

"If a person does approach the learned and the virtuous and makes inquiries in the foregoing manner, he, as a result of his inquiring spirit, when born among mankind, will be intelligent."

Certainly, we are born with hereditary characteristics. At the same time, we possess certain innate abilities that science cannot adequately account for. To our parents, we are indebted for the gross sperm and ovum that form the physical side of this so-called "being." There, they remain dormant until this potential germinal compound is vitalized by the karmic energy needed for the production of the fetus. *Kamma* is, therefore, the indispensable cause of this being.

The accumulated karmic tendencies, inherited in the course of previous lives, play a far greater role than the hereditary cells and genes of one's parents in the formation of both physical and mental characteristics.

The *Buddha*, for instance, inherited, like every other human being, genetic material from his parents. But, physically, morally, and intellectually, there was no one comparable to Him in His long line of honorable ancestors. In the *Buddha's* own words, He belonged not to the Royal lineage but to that of the *Ariya Buddhas*. He was certainly a superman, an extraordinary being.

According to the Lakkhaṇa Sutta,[544] the *Buddha* inherited exceptional physical features, such as the thirty-two major marks, as the result of His past meritorious deeds. The ethical reason for acquiring each physical feature is clearly explained in the discourse.

It is obvious from this unique case that karmic tendencies could not only influence our physical organism, but also nullify the potentiality of our parental genes, hence, the significance of the *Buddha's* enigmatic statement: "We are the heirs of our own actions."

Dealing with this problem of variation, the *Atthasālinī*[545] states:

> *"Depending on this difference in kamma appears the difference in the birth of beings, high and low, base and exalted, happy and miserable. Depending on the difference in kamma appears the difference in the individual features of beings as beautiful and ugly, high-born and low-born, well-built and deformed. Depending on the difference in kamma appears the difference in worldly conditions of beings as gain and loss, fame and disgrace, blame and praise, happiness and misery."*

Thus, from a Buddhist standpoint, our present mental, moral, intellectual, and temperamental differences are preponderantly due to our own actions and tendencies, both past and present.

Not Everything is due to Kamma

Although Buddhism attributes this variation to the law of *kamma*, as the chief cause among a variety of causes, it does not, however, assert that everything is due to *kamma*. The law of *kamma*, important as it is, is only one of twenty-four causal conditions (*paccaya*) described by the *Buddha*.

The twenty-four modes of conditionality are:[546]

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[544] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Pāṭhikavagga, Lakkhaṇa Sutta, no. 30.

[545] The *Atthasālinī* is the Commentary to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* (*Classification of Dhammas*), the first book of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. It was compiled from earlier sources (now lost) by Buddhaghosa.

[546] This list is taken from Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 134—140.

1. Root condition (*hetu-paccaya*);
2. Object condition (*ārammaṇa-paccaya*);
3. Predominance condition (*adhipati-paccaya*);
4. Priority condition (*anantara-paccaya*);
5. Contiguity condition (*samanantara-paccaya*);
6. Co-nascence condition (*sahajāta-paccaya*);
7. Mutuality condition (*aññamañña-paccaya*);
8. Support condition (*nissaya-paccaya*);
9. Decisive support condition (*upanissaya-paccaya*);
10. Pre-nascence condition (*purejāta-paccaya*);
11. Post-nascence condition (*pacchājāta-paccaya*);
12. Repetition condition (*āsevana-paccaya*);
13. *Kamma* condition (*kamma-paccaya*);
14. *Kamma*-result condition (*vipāka-paccaya*);
15. Nutriment condition (*āhāra-paccaya*);
16. Faculty condition (*indriya-paccaya*);
17. *Jhāna* (absorption) condition (*jhāna-paccaya*);
18. Path condition (*magga-paccaya*);
19. Association condition (*sampayutta-paccaya*);
20. Dissociation condition (*vippayutta-paccaya*);
21. Presence condition (*atthi-paccaya*);
22. Absence condition (*natthi-paccaya*);
23. Disappearance condition (*vigata-paccaya*);
24. Non-disappearance condition (*avigata-paccaya*).

Refuting the erroneous view that "Whatsoever weal or woe or neutral feeling is experienced is all due to some previous action (*pubbekatahetu*)," the *Buddha* states:[547]

> *"So, then, owing to previous action, men will become murderers, thieves, unchaste, liars, slanderers, babblers, covetous, malicious, and perverse in view. Thus, for those who fall back on the former deeds as the essential reason, there is neither the desire to do, nor the effort to do, nor the necessity to do this deed or abstain from this deed."*

This important text contradicts the belief that all physical circumstances and mental attitudes spring solely from past *kamma*. If the present life is totally conditioned or wholly controlled by our past actions, then *kamma* is certainly tantamount to fatalism or predestination or predetermination, which means that one will not be able to mold one's present and future. If this were true, freewill would be an absurdity. Life would be purely mechanical, not much different from a machine. Whether we are created by an Almighty God who controls our destinies and fore-ordains our future, or are produced by

[547] *Anguttara Nikāya*.

an irresistible past *kamma* that completely determines our fate and controls our life's course, independent of any free action on our part, is essentially the same. The only difference then lies in the two words "God" and "*kamma*." One could easily be substituted for the other, because the ultimate operation of both forces would be identical. Such a fatalistic doctrine is not the Buddhist law of *kamma*.

The Five Niyāmas

According to Buddhism, there are five orders (*niyāmas*), or processes, which operate in the physical and mental realms. They are:

1. *Utu niyāma*, physical inorganic order; for example, seasonal phenomena of winds and rains, the unerring order of seasons, characteristic seasonal changes and events, causes of winds and rains, nature of heat, etc. belong to this group.

2. *Bija niyāma*, order of germs and seeds (physical organic order); for example, rice produced from rice seed, sugary taste from sugarcane or honey, and distinctive characteristics of fruits. The scientific theory of cells and genes and the physical similarity of twins may be ascribed to this order.

3. *Kamma niyāma*, order of acts (*kamma*) and results (*vipāka*); for example, desirable and undesirable acts produce corresponding good and bad results.

   As surely as water seeks its own level, so does *kamma*, given the opportunity, produce its inevitable result — not in the form of a reward or punishment but as an innate consequence. This sequence of deed and effect is as natural and necessary as the way of the sun and the moon and is the retributive principle of *kamma*.

   Inherent in *kamma* is also the continuitive principle.

   Manifold experiences, personal characteristics, accumulated knowledge, and so forth are all indelibly recorded in the palimpsest-like mind. All these experiences and characteristics follow one from life to life. Through lapse of time, they may be forgotten, as in the case of the experiences of our childhood. Infant prodigies and wonderful children, who speak in different languages without receiving any instruction, are noteworthy examples of the continuitive principle of *kamma*.

4. *Dhamma niyāma*, order of the norm; for example, the natural phenomena occurring at the birth of a *Bodhisatta* in his last birth. Gravitation and other similar laws of nature, the reason for being good, etc. may be included in this group.

5. *Citta niyāma*, order of mind or psychic law; for example, processes of consciousness, constituents of consciousness, power of mind, including telepathy, telesthesis, retrocognition, premonition, clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-reading, and other such psychic phenomena, which are inexplicable to modern science.

Every mental or physical phenomenon could be explained by these all-embracing five orders, or processes, which are laws in themselves. *Kamma*, as such, is only one of these five orders. Like all such natural laws, they do not require a lawgiver.

Of these five, the physical inorganic order (*utu niyāma*), the physical organic order (*bija niyāma*), and the order of the norm (*dhamma niyāma*) are, more or less, of the mechanical type, though they can be controlled to some extent by human ingenuity and the power of the mind. For example, fire normally burns, and extreme cold freezes, but men have walked unscathed over fire and meditated naked on snow-covered Himalayan mountainsides; horticulturists have worked marvels with flowers and fruits; and Yogis have performed levitation. Psychic law is equally mechanical, but Buddhist training aims at control of the mind, which is possible by Right Understanding and skillful volition. Karmic law operates quite automatically and, when the *kamma* is powerful, man cannot interfere with its inexorable result, though he may desire to do so; but, here also, Right Understanding and skillful volition can accomplish much and shape the future. Good *kamma*, persisted in, can hinder the ripening of bad.

Kamma is certainly an intricate law, whose working is fully comprehended only by a *Buddha*. The Buddhist aims at the final destruction of all *kamma*.

Kamma-vipāka (fruit of action) is one of the four unthinkables[548] (*acinteyya*), states the *Buddha* in the *Anguttara Nikāya*. ■

Further Reading

Ledi Sayādaw. 2000. *Niyāma-Dīpanī: The Manual of Cosmic Order*. Translated from the Pāḷi by Beni M. Barua, D. Litt., M. A., and revised and edited by Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, D. Litt., M. A., with the residuum translated by Ven. U Nyana, Patamagyaw. Originally published in 1921. Electronic version copyright 2000 by the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, United Kingdom.

Nyanaponika Thera (ed.). 2006. *Kamma and Its Fruit. Selected Essays by Leonard Bullen, Nina van Gorkom, Bhikkhu Ñāṇajīvako, Nyanaponika Thera, Francis Story*. (= The Wheel Publication No. 221—224.) 1st edition 1975; 2nd edition 1990 (reprinted 2003); BPS on-line edition 2006. Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

[548] *Acinteyya*, literally, "that which cannot or should not be thought," the unthinkable, incomprehensible, impenetrable, that which transcends the limits of thinking and over which, therefore, one should not ponder. There are four unthinkables: (1) the sphere of a *Buddha* (*Buddha-visaya*); (2) the sphere of the meditative absorptions (*jhāna-visaya*); (3) the sphere of *kamma*-result (*kamma-vipāka*); and (4) the sphere of brooding over the world (*loka-cintā*), especially over an absolute first beginning. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 5.

24

What is Kamma?

"Volition is kamma."[549]

Kamma

The Pāḷi term *kamma*, literally means "action" or "doing." Any kind of intentional action, whether mental, verbal, or physical, is regarded as *kamma*. It covers all that is included in the phrase: "thought, word, and deed." Generally speaking, all good and bad actions constitute *kamma*. In its ultimate sense, *kamma* means all moral and immoral volition (*kusala akusala cetanā*). Involuntary, unintentional, or unconscious actions, though technically deeds, do not constitute *kamma*, because volition, the most important factor in determining *kamma*, is absent. The *Buddha* said:

> *"I declare, O Bhikkhus, that volition is kamma. Having willed, one acts by body, speech, and thought."*

Every volitional action of persons, except those of *Buddhas* and *Arahants*, is called *kamma*. An exception is made in the case of *Buddhas* and *Arahants*, because they are delivered from both good and evil. They have eradicated both ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*), the roots of *kamma*. "Destroyed are their (germinal) seeds (*khīṇa-bījā*); selfish desires no longer grow," states the Ratana Sutta. This does not mean that the *Buddha* and *Arahants* are passive. They are tirelessly active in working for the real well-being and happiness of all. Their deeds, ordinarily accepted as good and moral, lack creative power as regards themselves. Understanding things as they truly are, they have finally shattered their cosmic fetters — the chain of cause and effect.

Some religions attribute this unevenness to *kamma*, but these religions differ from Buddhism when they state that even unintentional actions should be regarded as *kamma*. According to them, "the unintentional murderer of his mother is a hideous criminal. The man who kills or who harasses in any way a living being without intent, is none the less guilty, just as a man who touches fire is burnt."[550]

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[549] *Anguttara Nikāya*.
[550] Cf. Pousin, *The Way to Nirvāṇa*, p. 68.

This astounding theory undoubtedly leads to palpable absurdities. The embryo and the mother would both be guilty of making each other suffer. Further, the analogy of the fire is logically fallacious. For instance, a man would not be guilty if he got another person to commit the murder, for one is not burned if one gets another to put his hand into the fire. Moreover, unintentional actions would be much worse than intentional wrong actions, for, according to the comparison, a man who touched fire without knowing that it would burn is likely to be more deeply burned than a man who knows.

In the working of *kamma*, its most important feature is mind. All our words and deeds are colored by the mind, or consciousness, that we experience at such particular moments.

> *"When the mind is unguarded, thought also is unguarded. When the mind is guarded, bodily action is guarded, speech also is guarded, and thought also is guarded."*[551]

> *"Mind is the starting point in shaping who we are — as we think, so we become. If one speaks or acts with evil intentions, suffering will follow, just as the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that pull it along.*
>
> *"Mind is the starting point in shaping who we are — as we think, so we become. If one speaks or acts with pure intentions, happiness will follow, like a shadow that never leaves one's side."*[552]

Immaterial mind conditions all karmic activities.

Kamma does not necessarily mean past actions. It embraces both past and present deeds. Hence, in one sense, we are the result of what we were, and we will be the result of what we are. In another sense, it should be added, we are not totally the result of what we were, and we will not absolutely be the result of what we are. The present is no doubt the offspring of the past and the parent of the future, but the present is not always a true index of either the past or the future — so complex is the working of *kamma*. For instance, a criminal today may be a saint tomorrow; a good person yesterday may be a vicious one today.

Like attracts like. Good begets good. Evil begets evil. This is the law of *kamma*. In short, *kamma* is the law of cause and effect in the ethical realm.

Kamma and Vipāka

Kamma is action, and *vipāka*, fruit or result, is the reaction. Just as every subject is accompanied by a shadow, even so, every volitional activity is inevitably accompanied by its due effect. *Kamma* is like potential seed. Fruit, arising from the tree, which itself arose from the seed, is the *vipāka*, effect, or result. Inasmuch as *kamma* may be good or

[551] *Atthasālinī*.
[552] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verses 1—2.

bad, so may *vipāka*, fruit, be good or bad. Inasmuch as *kamma* is mental, so *vipāka*, too, is mental — it is experienced as happiness or bliss, unhappiness or misery, according to the nature of the *kamma* seed. *Ānisaṁsa* are the concomitant advantageous material conditions, such as prosperity, health, and longevity.

When *vipāka's* concomitant material conditions are disadvantageous, they are known as *ādinava* (evil consequences) and appear as ugliness, disease, short life span, and the like.

By *kamma* are meant the moral and immoral types of mundane consciousness (*kusala akusala lokiya citta*), and by *vipāka* are meant the resultant types of mundane consciousness (*lokiya vipāka citta*).

According to the *Abhidhamma*, *kamma* consists of twelve types of immoral consciousness, eight types of moral consciousness pertaining to the Sentient Realm (*kāmāvacara*), five types of moral consciousness pertaining to the Form Realms (*rūpāvacara*), and four types of moral consciousness pertaining to the Formless Realms (*arūpāvacara*).

The eight types of supramundane (*lokuttara*) consciousness are not regarded as *kamma*, because they tend to eradicate the roots of *kamma*. In them, the predominant factor is wisdom (*paññā*), while, in the mundane, it is volition (*cetanā*).

The nine types of moral consciousness pertaining to the Form Realms and the Formless Realms are the five *rūpāvacara* and four *arūpāvacara jhānas* (absorptions), which are purely mental.

Words and deeds are caused by the first twenty types of mundane consciousness. Verbal actions are done by the mind by means of speech. Bodily actions are done by the mind through the instrument of the body. Purely mental actions have no instrument other than the mind.

These twenty-nine types of consciousness are called *kamma*, because they have the power to produce their due effects quite automatically, independent of any external agency.

Those types of consciousness that one experiences as inevitable consequences of one's moral and immoral thoughts are called resultant consciousness pertaining to the Sentient Realm. The five types of resultant consciousness pertaining to the Form Realms and the four types of resultant consciousness pertaining to the Formless Realms are called *vipāka*, or fruition, of *kamma*.

As we sow, so we reap somewhere and sometime, in this life or in a future birth. What we reap today is what we have sown either in the close or distant past. As stated in the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*:

> *"According to the seed that is sown, so is the fruit one reaps therefrom. One who does good [will gather] good. One who does evil [will reap] evil. Sown is the seed and planted well. One shall enjoy the fruit thereof."*

Kamma is the law in itself that operates in its own field without the intervention of any external or independent ruling agency.

Inherent in *kamma* is the potentiality of producing its due effect. The cause produces the effect; the effect explains the cause. The seed produces the fruit, the fruit explains the seed, such is their relationship. Even so are *kamma* and its effect.

Happiness and misery, which are the common lot of humanity, are the inevitable effects of causes. From a Buddhist standpoint, they are not rewards and punishments, assigned by a supernatural, omniscient ruling power to a soul which has done good or evil. Theists who attempt to explain everything by this one temporal life and an eternal future life, ignoring the past, may believe in a post-mortem justice and may regard present happiness and misery as blessings and curses conferred on his creation by an omniscient and omnipotent Divine Ruler, who sits in heaven above controlling the destinies of the human race. Buddhism, which emphatically denies an arbitrarily created immortal soul, believes in natural law and justice, which cannot be suspended by either an Almighty God or an All-Compassionate *Buddha*. According to this natural law, acts bring their own rewards and punishments to the individual doer whether human justice finds him or not.

There are some who criticize Buddhism thus: So, you Buddhists, too, administer the opium of karmic doctrine to the poor, saying: "You are born poor in this life on account of your past evil *kamma*. He is born rich on account of his past good *kamma*. So be satisfied with your humble lot, but do good to be rich in your next life. You are being oppressed now because of your past evil *kamma*. That is your destiny. Be humble and bear your sufferings patiently. Do good now. You can be certain of a better happiness after death."

However, the Buddhist doctrine of *kamma* does not expound such fatalistic views, nor does it vindicate a post-mortem justice. The All-Merciful *Buddha*, who had no ulterior selfish motives, did not teach this law of *kamma* to protect the rich and comfort the poor by promising illusory happiness in an after-life.

According to the Buddhist doctrine of *kamma*, one is not always compelled by an iron necessity, for *kamma* is neither fate nor predestination imposed upon us by some mysterious unknown power to which we must helplessly submit ourselves. It is one's own doing reacting on oneself, and, consequently, one has the power to divert the course of *kamma* to some extent. How far one diverts it, depends on oneself.

The Cause of Kamma

Ignorance (*avijjā*), or not knowing things as they truly are, is the chief cause of *kamma*. Dependent on ignorance arise karmic activities (*avijjā paccaya saṁkhārā*), states the *Buddha* in the Doctrine of *paṭicca samuppāda* (Dependent Origination).

Associated with ignorance is its ally craving (*taṇhā*), the other root of *kamma*. Evil actions are conditioned by these two causes. All good deeds of a worldling (*puthujjana*), though associated with the three wholesome roots (*kusala-mūla*) of generosity (*alobha*), goodwill (*adosa*), and knowledge (*amoha*), are, nevertheless, regarded as *kamma*, because the two roots of ignorance and craving are latent in him.

The moral types of supramundane Path Consciousness (*maggacitta*) are not regarded as *kamma*, because they tend to eradicate the two root causes.

The Doer of Kamma

Who is the doer of *kamma*? Who reaps the fruit? "Is it a sort of accretion about a soul?" In answering these subtle questions, Venerable Buddhaghosa states in the *Visuddhimagga* (Chapter XIX):

> *Everywhere, in all the realms of existence, the noble disciple sees only mental and corporeal phenomena kept going through the concatenation of causes and effects. No producer of the volitional act, or kamma, does he see apart from the deed, no recipient of the kamma-result apart from the result. Moreover, he is well aware that wise men are merely using conventional language, when, with regard to a karmic act, they speak of a doer, or with regard to a kamma-result, they speak of the recipient of the result.*
>
> *No doer of the deeds is found,*
> *No one who ever reaps their fruits;*
> *Empty phenomena roll on:*
> *This alone is the correct view.*
>
> *And while the deeds and their results*
> *Roll on and on, conditioned all,*
> *There is no first cause to be found,*
> *Just as it is with seed and tree ...*
>
> *No god, no brahmā, can be called*
> *The creator of this wheel of life:*
> *Empty phenomena roll on,*
> *Dependent upon conditions all.*

According to Buddhism, there are two realities — (1) apparent and (2) ultimate. Apparent reality is ordinary conventional truth (*sammuti sacca*). Ultimate reality is abstract, or absolute, truth (*paramattha sacca*). For example, the table we see in front of us is apparent, or conventional, reality. In an ultimate sense, however, the so-called "table" consists of forces and qualities.

For ordinary purposes, a scientist would use the term "water," but, in the laboratory, he would say "H_2O." In the same way, for conventional purposes, such terms as "man," "woman," "being," "self," and so forth are used. These so-called "fleeting forms" consist of psychophysical phenomena that are constantly changing, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments.

Buddhists, therefore, do not believe in an unchanging entity, in an actor apart from the action, in a perceiver apart from the perception, in a conscious subject behind consciousness.

Who or what, then, is the doer of *kamma*? Who or what experiences the result? Volition (*cetanā*), or will, is itself the doer. Feeling (*vedanā*) is itself the reaper of the fruits of action. Apart from these pure mental states (*suddhadhammā*), there is none to sow and none to reap.

Just as, says Venerable Buddhaghosa, in the case of those elements of matter that go under the name of tree, as soon as, at any point, the fruit springs up, it is then said that the tree bears fruit, so also in the case of "aggregates" (*khandhas*), which go under the name of *deva* or man, when a fruition of happiness or misery springs up at any point, then, it is said, in conventional language, that "*deva* or man is happy or miserable."

In this respect, Buddhists agree with William James when, unlike René Descartes, he asserts: "Thoughts themselves are the thinkers."

Where is Kamma?

"Stored within the psyche," writes a certain psychoanalyst, "but usually inaccessible and to be reached only by some, is the whole record, without exception, of every experience the individual has passed through, every influence felt, every impression received. The subconscious mind is not only an indelible record of individual experiences but also retains the impress of primeval impulses and tendencies, which so far from being outgrown as we fondly deem them in civilized man, are subconsciously active and apt to break out in disconcerting strength at unexpected moments."

A Buddhist would make the same assertion, but with one vital modification. Not stored within any postulatory "psyche," for there is no proof of any such receptacle or storehouse in the ever-changing complex machinery of man, but dependent upon the individual psychophysical continuity or flux is every experience that the so-called "being" has passed through, every influence felt, every impression received, every characteristic — divine, human, or brutal — developed. In short, the entire karmic force is dependent upon the dynamic mental flux (*citta santati*), ever ready to manifest itself in multifarious phenomena as occasion arises.

> *"Where, Venerable Sir, is kamma?"* King Milinda asks Venerable Nāgasena. To which Venerable Nāgasena replies:
>
> *"O Mahārāja, kamma is not said to be stored somewhere in this fleeting consciousness or in any other part of the body. But, dependent upon mind and matter, it rests manifesting itself at the opportune moment, just as mangoes are not said to be stored somewhere in the mango tree, but, dependent upon the mango tree, they lie, springing up in due season."*

Neither wind nor fire is stored in any particular place, nor is *kamma* stored anywhere within or without the body.

Kamma is an individual force and is transmitted from one existence to another. It plays the chief part in molding of character and explains the marvelous phenomena of genius, child prodigies, and so forth. The clear understanding of this doctrine is essential for the welfare of the world.

Kamma and Rebirth[553]

Of all those circumstances and conditions constituting the destiny of a person, none, according to the *Buddha's* Teaching, can come into existence without a previous cause and the presence of a number of necessary conditions. Just as, for example, a healthy mango tree with healthy and sweet fruits will never come from a rotten mango seed, in like manner, the evil volitional actions, or evil *kamma*, produced in former births, are the seeds, or root-causes, of an evil destiny in a later birth. It is a necessary postulate of thinking that the good and bad destiny of a person, as well as his latent character, cannot be produced by mere chance, but must, of necessity, have its causes in a previous birth.

According to Buddhism, no organic entity, physical or psychological, can come into existence without a previous cause, that is, without a preceding congenial state out of which it has developed. Moreover, no living organic entity can ever be produced by something altogether outside of it. It can only originate out of itself, that is, it must have already existed in the bud, or germ, as it were. To be sure, besides this cause, or root-condition, or seed, there are still many minor conditions required for its actual arising and its development, just as the mango tree, besides its main cause, the seed, requires, for its germinating, growth, and development, such further conditions as earth, water, light, heat, etc. Thus, the true cause of the birth of a person, together with his character and destiny, goes back to the *kamma*-volitions produced in a former birth.

According to Buddhism, there are three factors necessary for the rebirth of a human being, that is, for the formation of the embryo in the mother's womb. They are: the female ovum, the male sperm, and the *kamma*-energy. This *kamma*-energy is sent forth by a dying individual at the moment of his death. The father and mother only provide the necessary physical material for the formation of the embryonic body. With regard to the characteristic traits, the tendencies, or faculties, lying latent in the embryo, the *Buddha's* Teaching may be explained in the following way: The dying individual, with his whole being convulsively clinging to life, at the very moment of his death, sends forth karmic energies which, like a flash of lightning, hit the new mother's womb at the moment of conception. Thus, through the impinging of the *kamma*-energies on the ovum

[553] This and the remaining sections of this chapter are adapted from a lecture given at Ceylon University, Śri Lanka (Ceylon), in 1947 by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera entitled "Kamma and Rebirth" and published as part of *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures* (= The Wheel Publication no. 394/396) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1994]), pp. 14—31.

and sperm, there appears, just as a precipitate, the so-called primary cell.

This process may be compared with the functioning of the air vibrations produced through speech, which, by impinging on the acoustic organ of another person, produce a sound, which is a purely subjective sensation. On this occasion, no transmigration of a sound-sensation takes place, but simply a transference of energy, called the air vibrations. In a similar way, the *kamma*-energies sent out by the dying individual impinge upon the physical material furnished by the parents to produce a new embryonic being. But no transmigration of a soul-entity takes place on that occasion but simply the transmission of *kamma*-energy.

Hence, we may say that the present life-process is the objectification of the corresponding pre-natal *kamma*-process and that the future life-process is the objectification of the corresponding present *kamma*-process. Thus, nothing transmigrates from one life to the next. And, what we call our ego is, in reality, only this process of continual change, of continual arising and passing away. Thus follows moment after moment, day after day, year after year, life after life. Just as the wave that apparently hastens over the surface of the pond is, in reality, nothing but a continuous rising and falling of ever new masses of water, each time called forth through the transmission of energy, even so, closely considered, in the ultimate sense, there is no permanent ego-entity that passes through the ocean of *saṁsāra*, but merely a process of physical and psychical phenomena takes place, ever and again being whipped up by the impulse and will for life.

It is undoubtedly true that the mental condition of the parents at the moment of conception has considerable influence upon the character of the embryonic being and that the nature of the mother may make a deep impression on the character of the child she bears in her womb. The indivisible unity of the psychic individuality of the child, however, can, in no way, be produced by the parents. One must here never confuse the actual cause — the preceding state out of which the later state arises — with the influences and conditions from without. If it were really the case that the new individual, as an inseparable whole, was begotten solely by its parents, twins could never exhibit totally opposite personalities. In such a case, children, especially twins, would, with absolutely no exceptions, always be found to possess the same character as the parents.

Subconscious Life-Stream

The law of rebirth can be made comprehensible only by the subconscious life-stream (*bhavanga-sota*[554]), which is mentioned in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* and further explained in the Commentaries, especially the *Visuddhimagga*. The fundamental import of *bhavanga-sota*, or the subconscious life-stream, as a working hypothesis for the explanation of the various Buddhist doctrines, such as rebirth, *kamma*, remembrance of former births, etc., has up to now not yet been sufficiently recognized, or understood, by

[554] Sanskrit *bhavaṅga-śrota*.

Western scholars. The term *bhavanga-sota* is identical with what modern psychologists, such as Jung, for example, call the "unconscious", not meaning, thereby, of course, the eternal soul-entity of Christian teaching nor the *ātman* of Hindu philosophy, but an ever-changing subconscious process. This subconscious life-stream is the necessary condition of all life. In it, all impressions and experiences are stored up, or better said, appear as a multiple process of past images, or memories, which, however, as such, are hidden to full consciousness, but which, especially in dreams, cross the threshold of consciousness and manifest themselves.

The existence of the subconscious life-stream, or *bhavanga-sota*, is a necessary postulate of Buddhist thinking. If, whatever we have seen, heard, felt, perceived, thought, experienced, and done were not, without exception, registered somewhere and in some way, either in the extremely complex nervous system or in the subconscious or unconscious, we would not even be able to remember what we were thinking the preceding moment; we would not know anything of the existence of other beings and things; we would not know our parents, teachers, friends, and so on; we would not even be able to think at all, inasmuch as thinking is conditioned by the remembrance of former experiences; and our mind would be a complete blank slate and emptier than the actual mind of an infant just born, nay even of the embryo in the mother's womb.

Thus, this subconscious life-stream, or *bhavanga-sota*, can be called the precipitate of all our former actions and experiences, which must have been going on since time immemorial and must continue for still immeasurable periods of time to come. Therefore, what constitutes the true and innermost nature of man, or any other being, is this subconscious life-stream, of which we do not know whence it came and whither it will go. As Heraclitus says: "We never enter the same stream. We are identical with it, and we are not." In like manner, we find in the *Milindapañha*: "neither is it the same, nor is it another (that is reborn)." All life, be it corporeal, conscious, or subconscious, is a flowing, a continual process of becoming, change, and transformation. Hence, there is no permanent ego, or personality, to be found, but merely these transitory phenomena.

In the ultimate sense, there do not even exist such things as mental states, that is, stationary things. Feeling, perception, consciousness, etc. are, in reality, mere passing processes of feeling, perceiving, becoming conscious, etc., within which and outside of which no separate or permanent entity lies hidden.

No Real Beings

Thus, a real understanding of the *Buddha's* doctrine of *kamma* and rebirth is possible only to one who has caught a glimpse of the egoless nature (*anattā*[555]) and the conditionality (*idappaccayatā*[556]) of all phenomena of existence.

Since, in the ultimate sense, there is no such thing as a real ego-entity, one cannot

[555] Sanskrit *anātman*.
[556] Sanskrit *idaṁpratyayatā*.

properly speak of the rebirth of such a thing. What we are dealing with here is simply a psychophysical process that is cut off at death only to continue immediately thereafter somewhere else.

Similarly, we find in the *Milindapañha*:

> *"Does, Venerable Sir, rebirth take place without transmigration?"*
> *"Yes, O King."*
> *"But how, Venerable Sir, can rebirth take place without the passing over of anything? Please illustrate this matter for me."*
> *"If, O King, a man should light a lamp with the help of another lamp, does the light of the one lamp pass over to the other lamp?"*
> *"No, Venerable Sir."*
> *"Likewise, O King, does rebirth take place without transmigration."*

Further, it is said in the *Visuddhimagga* (Chapter XVII):

> *Whosoever has no clear idea about death and does not know that death consists in the dissolution of the five aggregates of existence, he thinks that it is a person, or being, that dies and transmigrates to a new body, etc. And, whosoever has no clear idea about rebirth and does not know that rebirth consists in the arising of the five aggregates of existence, he thinks that it is a person, or a being, that is reborn or that the person appears in a new body. And, whosoever has no clear idea about saṁsāra, the round of rebirth, he thinks that a real person wanders from this world to another world, comes from that world to this world, etc. And, whosoever has no clear idea about the phenomena of existence, he thinks that the phenomena are his ego or something belonging to the ego, or something permanent, joyful, or pleasant. And, whosoever has no idea about the conditional arising of the phenomena of existence and about the arising of karmic volitions conditioned through ignorance, he thinks that it is the ego that understands or fails to understand, that acts or causes to act, that enters into a new existence at rebirth. Or he thinks that the atoms or the Creator, etc., with the help of the embryonic process, shape the body, provide it with various faculties, that it is the ego that receives the sensory impressions, that feels, that desires, that becomes attached, that enters into existence again in another world. Or he thinks that all beings come to life through fate or chance.*
>
> *A mere phenomenon it is, a thing conditioned,*
> *That arises in the next existence.*
> *But it does not transmigrate there from a previous life,*
> *And, yet, it cannot arise without a previous cause.*
>
> *When this conditionally-arisen psychophysical phenomenon [the embryo] arises, one says that it has entered into [the next] existence. However, no being,*

or life-principle, has transmigrated from the previous existence into this existence, and, yet, this embryo could not have come into existence without a previous cause.

This phenomenon may be compared with the reflection of one's face in the mirror or with the calling forth of an echo by one's voice. Now, just as the image in the mirror or the echo are produced by one's face or voice without any passing over of face or voice, likewise is it with the arising of rebirth consciousness. Were there to exist a full identity, or sameness, between the earlier and later birth, in that case, milk could never turn to curd; and, should there exist an entire otherness, curd could never be conditioned through milk. As already noted, all life, be it corporeal, conscious, or subconscious, is a flowing, a continual process of becoming, change, and transformation.

To sum up the foregoing, we may say: There are, in the ultimate sense, no real beings or things, neither creators nor created — there is only this process of corporeal and mental phenomena. This whole process of existence has an active side and a passive side. The active, or causal, side of existence consists of the *kamma*-process, that is, of wholesome and unwholesome *kamma*-activity, while the passive, or caused, side consists of *kamma*-results, or *vipāka*, the so-called rebirth process, that is, the arising, growing, decaying, and passing away of all these karmically neutral phenomena of existence.

Thus, in the absolute sense, there exists no real being that wanders through the round of rebirths, but merely this ever-changing twofold process of *kamma*-activities and *kamma*-results takes place. The present life is, as it were, the reflection of the past one, and the future life will be the reflection of the present one. The present life is the result of the past karmic activity, and the future life will be the result of the present karmic activity. Therefore, nowhere is there to be found an ego-entity that could be the performer of the karmic activity or the recipient of the *kamma*-result. Hence, Buddhism does not teach any real transmigration, since, in the highest sense, there is no such thing as a being, or ego-entity, much less the transmigration of such a thing.

Law of Affinity: Like Produces Like

In every person, as already mentioned, there seems to lie dormant the dim instinctive feeling that death cannot be the end of all things, but that, somehow, continuation must follow. In which way this may be, however, is not immediately clear.

It is, perhaps, quite true that a direct proof for rebirth cannot be given. We have, however, the authentic reports about children who sometimes are able to remember, quite distinctly, events of their previous life. By the way, what we see in dreams are mostly distorted reflexes of real things and happenings experienced in this or a previous life. And how could we ever explain the birth of such prodigies as Jeremy Bentham, who could already read and write Greek and Latin in his fourth year, or John Stuart Mill, who read Greek at the age of three and who wrote a history of Rome at the age of six, or Babington Macaulay, who wrote a compendium of world history at the age of six, or

Beethoven, who gave public concerts when he was seven, or Mozart, who had already written musical compositions when he was six, or Voltaire, who read the fables of Lafontaine when he was three years old. Should all these prodigies and geniuses, some of whom came from illiterate parents, not already have laid the foundations to their extraordinary faculties in previous births?

In any case, we may rightly state that the Buddhist doctrine of *kamma* and rebirth offers the only plausible explanation for all the variations and dissimilarities in nature. From the apple seed, only an apple tree may grow, not a mango tree; from a mango seed, only a mango tree may grow, not an apple tree. Likewise, all animate things, such as man, animals, etc., probably even plants, must, of necessity, be manifestations and objectifications of some specific kind of subconscious impulse or will for life. Buddhism says nothing on the last-mentioned point — it simply states that all vegetable life belongs to the germinal order.

Buddhism teaches that, if bodily, verbal, and mental *kamma*, or volitional activities, have been evil and low in previous births and have thus unfavorably influenced the subconscious life-stream (*bhavanga-sota*), then also, the results, manifested in the present life, must be disagreeable and evil; and so must be the character and the new actions induced or conditioned through the evil pictures and images of the subconscious life-stream. If, however, beings have sown good seeds in former lives, then, they will reap good fruits in the present life.

In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta (no. 135), a Brahmin raises the problem:

> *"There are found people who are short-lived and those who are long-lived; there are found people who are very sick and those who are healthy; there are found people who are hideous and those who are beautiful; there are found people who are powerless and those who are powerful; there are found people who are poor and those who are rich; there are found people who are of low family and those who are of high family; there are found people who are stupid and those who are intelligent. What then, Master Gotama, is the reason that such inferiority and superiority are found among human beings?"*

The Blessed One gave the reply:

> *"Beings are owners of their kamma, heirs of their kamma; kamma is the womb from which they have sprung, kamma is their friend and refuge. Thus, kamma divides beings into high and low."*

In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, 8 4, Dānavaggo — 10, Duccaritavipākasuttaṁ, it is stated:

> *"Killing, stealing, adultery, lying, backbiting, harsh speech, and empty prattling, practiced, cultivated, and frequently engaged in, will lead to hell, the animal world, or the realm of hungry ghosts.*

According to the *Majjhima Nikāya*, Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta (no. 135) (this is a synopsis):

> *"Whoever kills and is cruel will either go to hell or, if reborn as a human being, will be short-lived. Whoever tortures other beings will be afflicted with disease. The hater will be hideous, the envious will be without influence, the stubborn will be of low rank, the indolent will be ignorant."*

In the opposite case, a person will be reborn in a heavenly world or, if reborn as a human being, will be endowed with health, beauty, influence, riches, noble rank, and intelligence.

George Grimm, in his book *The Doctrine of the Buddha*, tries to show how the law of affinity may, at the moment of death, regulate the grasping of the new germ. He says:

> *Whoso, devoid of compassion can kill men, or even animals, carries deep within himself the inclination to shorten life. He finds satisfaction, or even pleasure, in the short-livedness of other creatures. Short-lived germs have therefore some affinity for him, an affinity which makes itself known after his death in the grasping of another germ, which then takes place to his own detriment. Even so, germs bearing within themselves the power of developing into a deformed body have an affinity for one who finds pleasure in ill-treating and disfiguring others.*
>
> *Any angry person begets within himself an affinity for ugly bodies and their respective germs, since it is the characteristic mark of anger to disfigure the face.*
>
> *Whoso is jealous, niggardly, haughty, carries within himself the tendency to grudge everything to others, and to despise them. Accordingly, germs that are destined to develop in poor outward circumstances possess affinity for him.*

Misconceptions about Kamma

At this point, it is necessary to rectify several wrong applications of the term *kamma* prevailing in the West: the Pāḷi word *kamma* (Sanskrit *karma*) comes from the root *kar-* "to do, to make, to act" and thus means "deed, action, etc." As a Buddhist technical term, *kamma* is a name for wholesome and unwholesome volition or will (*kusala-* and *akusula-cetanā*) and the consciousness and mental factors associated therewith, manifested as bodily, verbal, or mere mental action. According to the *suttas*:

> *"Volition, monks, do I call kamma. Through volition, one does the kamma by means of body, speech, or mind."*

Thus, *kamma* is volitional action, nothing more, nothing less.

The following three statements result from this fact:

1. The term *kamma* never comprises the result of action, as most people in the West understand this term. *Kamma* is wholesome or unwholesome volitional action, and *kamma-vipāka* is the result of action.

2. There are some who consider every happening, even our new wholesome and unwholesome actions, to be the result of our prenatal *kamma*. In other words, they believe that the results again become the causes of new results, and so on *ad infinitum*. Thus, they conclude that Buddhism is fatalistic and that, in this case, our destiny can never be influenced or changed, and, therefore, no deliverance ever be attained. Such a fatalistic view has nothing to do with the Buddhist concept of *kamma*. According to Buddhism, one has the power to influence the course of *kamma* to some extent. How much one influences it, depends on oneself.

3. There is a third wrong application of the term *kamma*, being an amplification of the first view, that is, that the term *kamma* comprises also the result of action. It is the assumption of a so-called "collective *kamma*," "joint *kamma*," "group *kamma*," or "mass *kamma*." According to this view, a group of people, for example, a nation, should be responsible for the bad deeds formerly done by this so-called "same" people. In reality, however, this present people may not consist at all of the same individuals who did the bad deeds. According to Buddhism, it is, of course, quite true that anybody who suffers bodily, suffers for his past or present bad deeds. Thus also, each of those individuals born within that suffering nation must, if actually suffering bodily, have done evil somewhere, either here or in one of the innumerable spheres of existence, but he may not have had anything to do with the bad deeds of the so-called "nation." We might say that, through his evil *kamma*, he was attracted to the hellish condition befitting him. In short, the term *kamma* applies, in each instance, only to wholesome and unwholesome volitional activity of a single individual. *Kamma* thus forms the cause, or seed, from which results will accrue to an individual, be it in this life or hereafter.

Hence, man has it in his power to shape his future destiny by means of his will and actions. It depends on his actions, or *kamma*, whether his destiny will lead him up or down, either to happiness or to misery. Moreover, *kamma* is the cause and seed not only for the continuation of the life-process after death, that is, for the so-called "rebirth," but, already in this present life-process, our actions, or *kamma*, may produce good and bad results, and exercise a decisive influence on our present character and destiny. Thus, for instance, if, day by day, we are practicing kindness towards all living beings, humans as well as animals, we will grow in goodness, while hatred, and all evil actions done through hatred, as well as all the evil and agonizing mental states produced thereby, will not so easily rise again in us, and our nature and character will become firm, happy, peaceful, and calm.

If we practice unselfishness and liberality, greed and avarice will lessen. If we practice love and kindness, anger and hatred will vanish. If we develop wisdom and knowledge, ignorance and delusion will more and more disappear. The less greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) dwell in our hearts, the less we will be inclined to commit evil and unwholesome actions of body, speech, and mind. For all evil things, and all evil destiny, are really rooted in greed, hatred, and ignorance, and, of these three things, ignorance (*avijjā*), or delusion (*moha*), is the chief and the primary cause of all evil and misery in the world. If there is no more ignorance, there will be no more greed and hatred, no more rebirth, and no more suffering.

This goal, however, in the ultimate sense, will be realized only by the Holy Ones (*Arahants*), that is, by those who, forever and all time, are freed from these three roots, and this is accomplished through the penetrating insight, or *vipassanā*, into the impermanency, unsatisfactoriness, and egolessness of this whole life-process, and through the detachment from all forms of existence resulting therefrom. As soon as greed, hatred, and ignorance have become fully and forever extinguished, and, thereby, the will for life, convulsively clinging to existence, and the thirsting for life have come to an end, then, there will be no more rebirth, and there will have been realized the goal shown by the Enlightened One, namely, extinction of all rebirth and suffering. Thus, the *Arahant* performs no more *kamma*, that is, no more karmically wholesome or unwholesome volitional actions. He is freed from this life-affirming will expressed in bodily actions, words, or thoughts, freed from this seed, or cause, of all existence and life.

One's Character

Now, what is called character is, in reality, the sum of these subconscious tendencies produced partly by the prenatal, partly by the present volitional activity, or *kamma*. And these tendencies may, during one's life, become an inducement to wholesome or unwholesome volitional activity by body, speech, or mind. If, however, the thirst for life rooted in ignorance is fully extinguished, then, there will be no new entering again into existence. Once the root of a coconut tree has been fully destroyed, the tree will die off. In exactly the same way, there will be no entering again into a new existence once the life-affirming three evil roots of greed, hatred, and ignorance have been forever destroyed. Here, one should not forget that all such personal expressions as "I", "he", "Holy One", etc. are merely conventional names for this really impersonal life-process.

In this connection, it must be stated that, according to Buddhism, it is merely the last karmic volition just before death, the so-called death-proximate *kamma*, that decides the immediately following rebirth. In Buddhist countries, it is, therefore, the custom to recall, to the dying man's memory, the good actions performed by him in order to rouse in him a happy and karmically pure state of mind as a preparation for a favorable rebirth; or his relatives let him see beautiful things which they, for his good and benefit, wish to offer to the *Buddha*, saying: "This, my dear, we shall offer to the *Buddha* for your good

and welfare;" or they let him hear a religious sermon, or let him smell the odor of flowers, or give him sweets to taste, or let him touch precious cloth, saying: "This we shall offer to the *Buddha* for your own good and welfare."

In the *Visuddhimagga* (Chapter XVII), it is said that, at the moment before death, as a rule, there will appear to the memory of the evil-doer the mental image of any evil deed, evil *kamma*, formerly done, or that there will appear before his mental eyes an attendant circumstance, or object, called *kamma-nimitta*, connected with that bad deed, such as blood or a blood-stained dagger, etc.; or he may see before his mind an indication of his imminent miserable rebirth, called *gati-nimitta*, such as fiery flames, etc. To another dying man, there may appear before his mind the image of a voluptuous object inciting his sensual lust.

To a good man, there may appear before his mind any noble deed, or *kamma*, formerly done by him, or an object that was present at that time, the so-called "*kamma-nimitta*," or he may see in his mind an indication of his imminent rebirth, or *gati-nimitta*, such as heavenly palaces, etc.

Kinds of Kamma

In the *suttas*, three kinds of *kamma*, or volitional actions, are distinguished with regard to the time of their bearing fruit, namely, (1) *kamma* bearing fruit in this life-time, (2) *kamma* bearing fruit in the next life, and (3) *kamma* bearing fruit in later lives. The explanations of this subject are somewhat too technical to be dealt with in detail here. They imply the following: The *kamma*-volitional stage of the process in the mind consists of a number of impulsive thought moments (*javana*), which flash up, one after the other, in rapid succession. Now, of these impulsive moments, the first one will bear fruit in this life-time, the last one in the next birth, and those between these two moments will bear fruit in later lives. The two kinds of *kamma*-bearing fruit in this life-time and in the next birth may sometimes become ineffective. *Kamma*, however, that bears fruit in later lives will, whenever and wherever there is an opportunity, be productive of *kamma*-result (*kamma-vipāka*), and, as long as this life-process continues, this *kamma* will never become ineffective.

The *Visuddhimagga* divides *kamma*, according to its functions, into four kinds: generative *kamma*, supportive *kamma*, counteractive *kamma*, and destructive *kamma*, all of which may be either wholesome or unwholesome.

Among these four kinds of *kamma*, the "generative" *kamma* generates at rebirth, along with, during the new life-continuity, corporeal and neutral mental phenomena, such as the five kinds of sense consciousness and mental factors associated with them, such as feeling, perception, sense-impression, etc.

The "supportive" *kamma*, however, does not generate any *kamma*-result, but, as soon as any other *kamma*-volition has brought about rebirth and a *kamma*-result has been produced, then, it supports, according to its nature, the agreeable or disagreeable phenomena and keeps them going.

The "counteractive" *kamma* also does not generate any *kamma*-result, but, as soon as any other *kamma*-volition has brought about rebirth and a *kamma*-result been produced, then, it counteracts, according to its nature, the agreeable or disagreeable phenomena and does not allow them to keep going on.

Finally, the "destructive" *kamma* does not generate any *kamma*-result, but, as soon as any other *kamma*-volition has brought about rebirth and a *kamma*-result been produced, then, it destroys the weaker *kamma* and admits only its own agreeable or disagreeable *kamma*-results.

In the Commentary to the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta (no. 135), generative *kamma* is compared with a farmer sowing seeds; supportive *kamma* with irrigating, fertilizing, and watching the field, etc.; counteractive *kamma* with the drought that causes a poor harvest; and destructive *kamma* with a fire that destroys the whole harvest.

Another illustration is this: The rebirth of Devadatta in a royal family was due to his good generative *kamma*. His becoming a monk and attaining high spiritual powers was due to good supportive *kamma*. His intention to kill the *Buddha* was due to counteractive *kamma*. His causing a split in the Order of monks was due to destructive *kamma*, as a result of which he was born in a world of misery.

It is beyond the scope of this short exposition to give detailed descriptions of all of the manifold divisions of *kamma* found in the Commentaries. What has been made clear is that, first and foremost, the Buddhist doctrine of rebirth has nothing to do with the transmigration of any soul, or ego-entity, since, in the ultimate sense, there does not exist any such "ego" or "I" but merely a continually changing process of psychic and corporeal phenomena, and, secondly, that the *kamma*-process and rebirth-process may both be made comprehensible only by the assumption of a subconscious life-stream (*bhavanga-sota*) underlying everything in living nature. ■

25

The Working of Kamma

"By kamma is the world led."[557]

Thought Processes

The working of *kamma* is an intricate law, which only a *Buddha* can fully comprehend. To obtain a clear understanding of this difficult subject, it is necessary to become acquainted with thought processes (*cittavīthi*) according to the *Abhidhamma*.

Mind, or consciousness, the essence of this so-called "being," plays the most important part in the complex machinery of man. It is mind that either defiles or purifies one. Mind, in fact, is both the bitterest enemy and the greatest friend of oneself.

When a person is fast asleep and is in a dreamless state, he experiences a kind of consciousness that is more or less passive than active. It is similar to the consciousness one experiences at the moment of conception and at the moment of death (*cuti*). The Buddhist philosophical term for this type of consciousness is *bhavanga*, which means "factor of life," or "indispensable cause or condition of existence." Arising and perishing every moment, it flows on like a stream, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments.

We experience this type of consciousness not only in a dreamless state but also in our waking state. In the course of our life, we experience *bhavanga* thought moments more than any other type of consciousness. Hence, *bhavanga* becomes an indispensable condition of life.

Some scholars identify *bhavanga* with subconsciousness. According to the *Dictionary of Philosophy*, subconsciousness is "a compartment of the mind alleged by certain psychologists and philosophers below the threshold of consciousness."

In the opinion of Western philosophers, subconsciousness and consciousness co-exist. But, according to Buddhist philosophy, no such two types of consciousness co-exist.[558]

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[557] *Atthasālinī*.

[558] According to Buddhist philosophy, there is no moment when we do not ordinarily experience a particular kind of consciousness, hanging on to some object, whether physical or mental. The time limit of such a consciousness is termed one thought moment. Each thought moment is preceded by prior and followed by subsequent thought moments. The rapidity of the succession of such thought moments is

Moreover, *bhavanga* is not a subplane. It does not correspond to a "subliminal consciousness" either. There does not even seem to be any place for the concept of *bhavanga* in Western philosophy. Perhaps, we may be using these philosophical terms with different meanings.

Bhavanga is so called because it is an essential condition for continued existence. "Life-continuum" has been suggested as the closest English equivalent for *bhavanga*.

This *bhavanga* consciousness, which one always experiences as long as it is uninterrupted by external stimuli, vibrates for one thought moment and passes away when a physical or mental object enters the mind. Suppose, for instance, the object presented is a physical form. Now, when the *bhavanga* stream of consciousness is arrested, sense-door consciousness (*pañcadvārāvajjana*), whose function it is to turn the consciousness towards the object, arises and passes away. Immediately after this, there arises visual consciousness (*cakkhuviññāṇa*), which sees the object, but yet does not know anything more about it. This sense operation is followed by a moment of the reception of the object so seen (*sampaṭicchana*). Next arises the investigating thought moment (*santīraṇa*), which momentarily examines the object so seen. This is followed by the determining thought moment (*votthapana*), when discrimination is exercised and freewill may play its part. On this depends the subsequent psychologically important stage *javana*. It is at this stage that an action is judged, whether it be moral or immoral. *Kamma* is performed at this stage. If viewed rightly (*yoniso manasikāra*), it becomes moral; if viewed wrongly (*ayoniso manasikāra*), it becomes immoral. Irrespective of the desirability or the undesirability of the object presented to the mind, it is possible for one to make the *javana* process moral or immoral. If, for instance, one meets an enemy, anger will arise automatically. A wise person might, on the contrary, with self-control, radiate a thought of love towards him. This is the reason why the *Buddha* states:

> *"By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil not done; by oneself is one purified. Everyone has the choice to be pure or impure. No one can purify another."*[559]

It is an admitted fact that environment, circumstances, habitual tendencies, and the like condition our thoughts. On such occasions, freewill is subordinated. There exists, however, the possibility for us to overcome those external forces and produce moral and immoral thoughts by exercising our freewill.

An extraneous element may be a causative factor, but we ourselves are directly responsible for the actions that ultimately follow.

It is extremely difficult to suggest a suitable English rendering for *javana*. "apperception" has been suggested by some. "Impulse" has been suggested as an alternative, which seems to be less satisfactory than "apperception." Here, the Pāḷi term will be retained.

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hardly conceivable by the ken of human knowledge. The commentators state that, during the time occupied by a flash of lightning, billions and billions of thought moments may arise.

[559] *Dhammapada*, XII, The Self, verse 165.

Javana, literally, means "running." It is so called because, in the course of a thought process, it runs for seven thought moments or, at times of death, for five thought moments with an identical object. The mental states occurring in all these thought moments are similar, but the potential force differs.

This entire thought process, which takes place in an infinitesimally short period of time, ends with the registering consciousness (*tadālambana*), which lasts for two thought moments. Thus, one thought process is completed at the expiration of seventeen thought moments.

The simile of the mango tree is usually cited to illustrate this thought process. A man is lying fast asleep at the foot of a mango tree with his head covered. A wind stirs the branches, and a fruit falls beside the head of the sleeping man. He removes his head covering and turns toward the object that has fallen. He sees it and then picks it up. He examines it and ascertains that it is a ripe mango fruit. He eats it and, swallowing the remnants with saliva, once more resigns himself to sleep.

The dreamless sleep corresponds to the unperturbed current of *bhavanga*. The striking of the wind against the tree corresponds to past *bhavanga*, and the swaying of the branches to vibrating *bhavanga*. The falling of the fruit from the tree represents the cessation of *bhavanga*. Turning towards the object corresponds to sense door adverting consciousness; sight of the object, to perception; picking up, to receiving consciousness; examination, to investigating consciousness; ascertaining that it is a mango fruit, to determining consciousness. The actual eating resembles the *javana* process, and the swallowing of the morsels corresponds to retention. The return to sleep resembles the subsiding of the mind into *bhavanga* again.

Of the seven *javana* thought moments, as stated above, the effect of the first moment is the weakest in potentiality that one may reap in this life itself. This is called "immediately effective" (*diṭṭhadhammavedaniya*) *kamma*. If it does not operate in this life, it becomes ineffective (*ahosi*). The next weakest is the seventh *javana* moment. One may reap its effect in the subsequent birth. Hence, it is termed "subsequently effective" (*upapajjavedaniya*) *kamma*, which, too, automatically becomes ineffective if it does not operate in the second birth. The effect of the intermediate *javana* moments may take place at any time in the course of one's wanderings in *saṁsāra* until final Liberation. This type of *kamma* is called "indefinitely effective" (*aparāpariyavedaniya*).

Classification of Kamma according to Time

There is, thus, a classification of *kamma* with reference to its time of operation:

1. Immediately effective *kamma* (*diṭṭhadhammavedaniya kamma*);
2. Subsequently effective *kamma* (*upapajjavedaniya kamma*);
3. Indefinitely effective *kamma* (*aparāpariyavedaniya kamma*);
4. Ineffective *kamma* (*ahosi kamma*).

Illustrations:

1. The result of good *kamma* reaped in this life: A husband and his wife possessed only one upper garment to wear when they went outside. One day, the husband heard the *Dhamma* from the *Buddha* and was so pleased with the Doctrine that he wished to offer his only upper garment, but his covetousness would not permit him to do so. He fought with his mind and, ultimately overcoming his covetousness, offered the garment to the *Buddha* and exclaimed: "I have won, I have won." The king was delighted to hear his story and, in appreciation of his generosity, presented him thirty-two robes. The devout husband kept one for himself and another for his wife and offered the rest to the *Buddha*.

2. The result of bad *kamma* reaped in this life: A hunter, who went hunting in the forest followed by his dogs, met a *Bhikkhu* by the wayside, who was proceeding on his alms rounds. Inasmuch as the hunter could not procure any game, he thought it was due to the unfortunate meeting of the *Bhikkhu*. While returning home, he met the same *Bhikkhu* and was deeply enraged at the second encounter. In spite of the entreaties of the innocent *Bhikkhu*, the hunter set his dogs on him. Finding no escape therefrom, the *Bhikkhu* climbed a tree. The wicked hunter ran up to the tree and pierced the soles of the *Bhikkhu's* feet with the point of an arrow. The pain was so excruciating that the robe the *Bhikkhu* was wearing fell on the hunter, completely covering him. The dogs, thinking that the *Bhikkhu* had fallen from the tree, attacked and devoured their own master.

3. Subsequently effective *kamma*: A millionaire's servant returned home in the evening after his laborious work in the field to see that all were observing the Eight Precepts, inasmuch as it was the full moon day. Learning that he also could observe them even for half a day, he took the precepts and fasted at night. Unfortunately, he died on the following morning and, as a result of his good action, was born in the *Deva* Realm.

   Another illustration is Ajātasattu, son of King Bimbisāra, who was born, immediately after his death, in a state of misery as a result of having killed his father.

4. Indefinitely effective *kamma*: No person is exempt from this kind of *kamma*. Even the *Buddhas* and *Arahants* may reap the effects of their past *kamma*. The Arahant Moggallāna, in the remote past, instigated by his wife, attempted to kill his mother and father. As a result of this, he suffered long in a woeful state and, in his last birth, was clubbed to death by bandits.

   The *Buddha* was wrongfully accused of murdering a female devotee of the naked ascetics. This was the result of his having insulted a Pacceka *Buddha* in one of His previous births.

   The *Buddha's* foot was slightly injured when Devadatta made a futile attempt to kill Him. This was due to His killing a stepbrother of His in a previous birth in order to appropriate his property.

Classification of Kamma according to Function

There is another classification of *kamma*, according to function (*kicca*):

1. Reproductive *kamma* (*janaka kamma*);
2. Supportive *kamma* (*upatthambhaka kamma*);
3. Counteractive *kamma* (*upapīḷaka kamma*);
4. Destructive *kamma* (*upaghātaka kamma*).

According to Buddhism, every subsequent birth is conditioned by the good or bad *kamma* that predominated at the moment of death. This kind of *kamma* is technically known as Reproductive *kamma* (*janaka kamma*).

The death of a person is merely the "temporary end of a temporary phenomenon." Though the present form perishes, another form, which is neither absolutely the same nor totally different, takes its place, dependent upon the thought that was powerful at the moment of death, since the karmic force that hitherto sustained it is not annihilated with the dissolution of the body. It is this last thought process, which is termed "Reproductive *kamma*," that determines the state of a person in his subsequent birth.

As a rule, the last thought process depends upon the general conduct of the person. In some exceptional cases, at the moment of death, perhaps due to favorable or unfavorable circumstances, a good person may experience a bad thought or a bad person a good one. The future birth will be determined by this last thought process, regardless of the general conduct of the dying person. This does not mean that the effects of the past action are obliterated. They will produce their inevitable results at the appropriate moment. Such reverse changes of birth account for the birth of vicious children to virtuous parents and of virtuous children to vicious parents.

Now, to assist and maintain or to weaken and obstruct the fruition of this Reproductive *kamma*, another past *kamma* may intervene. These types of *kamma* are termed "Supportive" *kamma* (*upatthambhaka kamma*) and "Counteractive" *kamma* (*upapīḷaka kamma*).

According to the law of *kamma*, the potential energy of the Reproductive *kamma* can be totally annulled by a more powerful opposing past *kamma*, which, seizing an opportunity, may quite unexpectedly operate, just as a counteractive force can obstruct the path of a flying arrow and bring it down to the ground. Such an action is termed "Destructive" *kamma* (*upaghātaka kamma*), which is more powerful than either Supportive or Counteractive *kamma* in that it not only obstructs but also destroys the whole force.

As an example of the operation of all four kinds of *kamma*, the case of Venerable Devadatta, who attempted to kill the *Buddha* and who caused a schism in the *Sangha*, may be cited. His Reproductive good *kamma* destined him to a birth in a royal family. His continued comfort and prosperity were due to the action of the Supportive *kamma*. The Counteractive *kamma* came into operation when he was subjected to humiliation as a

result of his being excommunicated from the *Sangha*. Finally, the Destructive *kamma* brought his life to a miserable end.

Classification of Kamma according to Effect

The following classification of *kamma* is according to the priority of effect (*vipākadānavasena*):

1. Weighty *kamma* (*garuka kamma*);
2. Death-proximate *kamma* (*maraṇāsanna kamma*);
3. Habitual *kamma* (*āciṇṇaka kamma* or *bahula kamma*);
4. Stored-up *kamma* (*kaṭattā kamma*).

The first is *garuka kamma*, which means a weighty, or serious, action. It is so called because it produces its effects for certain in this life or in the next. On the moral side, the weighty actions are the *jhānas*, or Absorptions, while on the immoral side, they are the subsequently effective heinous crimes (*ānantariya kamma*), namely, matricide, patricide, the murder of an *Arahant*, the wounding of the *Buddha*, and the creation of a schism in the *Sangha*.

If, for instance, any person were to develop the *jhānas* and later to commit one of these heinous crimes, his good *kamma* would be obliterated by the powerful evil *kamma*. His subsequent birth will be conditioned by the evil *kamma* in spite of his having gained the *jhānas* earlier. For example, Venerable Devadatta lost his psychic powers and was reborn in a woeful state after his death, because he wounded the *Buddha* and caused a schism in the *Sangha*.

King Ajātasattu, as the *Buddha* remarked, would have attained the first stage of Sainthood had he not killed his father. In this case, the powerful evil *kamma* obstructed his spiritual attainment.

When there is no Weighty *kamma* to condition the future birth, a Death-proximate (*maraṇāsanna*) *kamma* might operate. This is the action one does, or recollects, immediately before the dying moment. Owing to its significance in determining the future birth, the custom of reminding the dying person of his good deeds and making him do good on his deathbed still prevails in Buddhist countries.

Sometimes, a bad person may die happily and receive a good birth if, fortunately, he remembers or does a good act at the last moment. This does not mean that, although he enjoys a good birth, he will be exempt from the effects of the evil deeds he has accumulated during his lifetime.

At times, a good person, on the other hand, may die unhappily by suddenly remembering an evil act or by conceiving a bad thought, perchance compelled by unfavorable circumstances.

Habitual (*āciṇṇaka*) *kamma* is the next in priority of effect. It is the *kamma* that one constantly performs and recollects and towards which one has a great liking. Habits,

whether good or bad, become second nature. They more or less tend to mold the character of a person. At leisure moments, we often engage ourselves in our habitual thoughts and deeds. In the same way, at the moment of death, unless influenced by other circumstances, we, as a rule, recall to mind our habitual thoughts and deeds.

The last in this category is Cumulative (*kaṭattā*) *kamma*, which embraces all that cannot be included in the foregoing three. This is, as it were, the reserve fund of a particular being.

Classification of Kamma according to the Plane in which the Effects Take Place

The last classification of *kamma* is according to the plane in which the effects take place:

1. Evil actions (*akusala*) which may ripen in the Sense Sphere (*kāmaloka*);
2. Good actions (*kusala*) which may ripen in the Sense Sphere;
3. Good actions which may ripen in the Form Realms (*rūpaloka*);
4. Good actions which may ripen in the Formless Realms (*arūpaloka*).

There are ten evil actions caused by deed, word, and mind that produce evil *kamma*. Of them, three are committed by deed, namely, (1) killing (*pāṇātipāta*), (2) stealing (*adinnādāna*), and (3) sexual misconduct (*kāmesu micchācāra*).

Four are committed by word, namely, (4) lying (*musāvāda*), (5) slandering (*pisunavācā*), (6) harsh speech (*pharusavācā*), and (7) frivolous talk (*samphappalāpa*).

Three are committed by mind, namely, (8) covetousness (*abhijjhā*), (9) ill will (*vyāpāda*), and (10) wrong view (*micchādiṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*).

Killing means intentionally taking the life of any living being. The Pāḷi term *pāṇa* strictly means the psychophysical life pertaining to one's particular existence. The wanton destruction of this life force, without allowing it to run its due course, is *pāṇātipāta*. *Pāṇa* means that which breathes. Hence, all animate beings, including animals, are regarded as *pāṇa*, but not plants, since they do not possess a mind. *Bhikkhus* and *Bhikkhunīs*, however, are forbidden even to destroy plant life. This rule, it may be mentioned, does not apply to lay followers.

The following five conditions are necessary in order to complete the evil of killing:

1. A living being;
2. Knowledge that it is a living being;
3. Intention to kill;
4. Effort to kill;
5. Consequent death.

The gravity of the evil depends on the goodness and the magnitude of the being concerned. The killing of a virtuous person or a big animal is regarded as more heinous than the killing of a vicious person or a small animal, because a greater effort is needed to commit the evil, and the loss involved is considerably greater.

The evil effects of killing are: shortness of life, ill-health, constant grief due to the separation from loved ones, and constant fear.

Five conditions are necessary for the completion of the evil of stealing:

1. Another's property;
2. Knowledge that it is another's property;
3. Intention to steal;
4. Effort to steal;
5. Actual removal.

The inevitable consequences of stealing are: poverty, misery, disappointment, and dependent livelihood.

Four conditions are necessary to complete the evil of sexual misconduct:

1. The thought to enjoy;
2. Consequent effort;
3. Means to gratify;
4. Gratification.

The inevitable consequences of sexual misconduct are: having many enemies; union with undesirable wives, husbands, or partners; birth as a woman; or becoming a eunuch (*paṇḍaka*, *opakkamikapaṇḍaka*, or *lūnapaṇḍaka*).

Four conditions are necessary to complete the evil of lying:

1. An untruth;
2. Intention to deceive;
3. Utterance;
4. Actual deception.

The inevitable consequences of lying are: being subject to abusive speech and vilification, untrustworthiness, and stinking mouth.

Four conditions are necessary to complete the evil of slandering:

1. Persons who are to be divided;
2. The intention to separate them;
3. The desire to endear oneself to another;
4. The communication.

The inevitable consequence of slandering is the dissolution of friendship without any sufficient cause.

Three conditions are necessary to complete the evil of harsh speech:

1. A person to be abused;
2. Angry thought;
3. Actual abuse.

The inevitable consequences of harsh speech are: being detested by others though absolutely harmless and having a harsh voice.

Two conditions are necessary to complete the evil of frivolous talk:

1. The inclination towards frivolous talk;
2. Its narration.

The inevitable consequences of frivolous talk are: defective bodily organs and incredible speech.

Two conditions are necessary to complete the evil of covetousness:

1. Another's possessions;
2. Adverting to it, thinking, "if only this were mine!"

The inevitable consequence of covetousness is non-fulfillment of one's wishes.

Two conditions are necessary to complete the evil of ill will:

1. Another person;
2. The thought of doing harm.

The inevitable consequences of ill will are: ugliness, manifold diseases, and detestable nature.

Wrong view is seeing things incorrectly or mistakenly; it is also called "false view" or "mistaken view." Wrong beliefs, such as the denial of the efficacy of deeds, are also included in this evil. Two conditions are necessary to complete the evil of wrong view:

1. Distorted manner in which the object is viewed;
2. The understanding of it according to that misconception.

The inevitable consequences of wrong view are: base desires, lack of wisdom, dull wit, chronic diseases, and blameworthy ideas.

According to Buddhism, there are ten kinds of wrong views:

1. There is no such virtue as generosity (*dinnaṁ*). This means that there is no good effect in giving alms.
2. There is no such virtue as liberal alms giving (*itthaṁ*).
3. There is no such virtue as offering gifts to friends (*hutaṁ*). Here, too, the implied meaning is that there is no effect in such charitable actions.
4. There is neither fruit nor result of good or evil actions.
5. There is no such belief as "this world."
6. There is no such belief as "a world beyond."
7. There is no mother — that is, there is no effect in anything done to her.
8. There is no father — that is, there is no effect in anything done to him.
9. There are no beings who die and are being reborn (*opapātika*).
10. There are no righteous and well-disciplined recluses and Brahmins who, having realized by their own super-intellect this world and the world beyond, make known the same — the reference here is to *Buddhas* and *Arahants*.

There are ten kinds of meritorious actions (*kusalakamma*): (1) generosity (*dāna*); (2) morality (*sīla*); (3) meditation (*bhāvanā*); (4) reverence (*apacāyana*); (5) service (*veyyāvacca*); (6) transference of merit (*pattidāna*); (7) rejoicing in the good actions of others (*anumodanā*); (8) hearing the doctrine (*dhammasavana*); (9) expounding the doctrine (*dhammadesanā*); and (10) straightening one's own views (*diṭṭhijukamma*).

Sometimes, these ten moral actions are regarded as twelve by the introduction of subdivisions to (7) and (10). Praising the good actions of others (*pasaṁsā*) is added to rejoicing in the good actions of others (*anumodanā*), while taking the Three Refuges (*saraṇa*) and Mindfulness (*anussati*) are substituted for straightening one's own views (*diṭṭhijukamma*).

Generosity yields wealth. Morality gives birth in noble families and in states of happiness. Meditation gives birth in the Form Realms and Formless Realms and helps to gain Higher Knowledge and Emancipation. Transference of merit acts as a cause to give in abundance in future births. Rejoicing in the merit of others produces joy wherever one is born. Both expounding the doctrine and hearing the *Dhamma* are conducive to wisdom. Reverence is the cause of noble parentage. Service produces large retinue. Praising the good works of others results in receiving praise for oneself. Seeking the Three Refuges results in the destruction of defilements. Mindfulness is conducive to diverse forms of happiness.

The following five[560] kinds of absorptions (*jhānas*) are purely mental:

1. The first *jhāna* moral consciousness, which consists of initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), rapture (also called "ecstasy," "zest," or "pleasurable interest") (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

[560] According to the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, there are five *rūpajjhānas*, but the *Visuddhimagga* mentions only four. There is no great difference between the two interpretations. In the former, the *jhānas* are divided into five according to the *jhāna* factors (*jhānanga*). In the latter, the first *jhāna* consists of two factors, while the second *jhāna* consists of the final three factors without the first two.

2. The second *jhāna* moral consciousness, which consists of sustained application (*vicāra*), rapture (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).
3. The third *jhāna* moral consciousness, which consists of rapture (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*), and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).
4. The fourth *jhāna* moral consciousness, which consists of happiness (*sukha*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).
5. The fifth *jhāna* moral consciousness, which consists of equanimity (*upekkhā*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

These *jhānas* have their corresponding effects in the Form Realms.

There are four *arūpajjhānas*, which have their corresponding effects in the Formless Realms:

1. Moral consciousness dwelling in the Infinity of Space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*);
2. Moral consciousness dwelling in the Infinity of Consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*);
3. Moral consciousness dwelling on Nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*);
4. Moral consciousness in which Perception neither is nor is not (Neither Perception nor Non-Perception) (*n'eva saññān' āsaññāyatana*).

Saṁkhāra

The word *saṁkhāra*[561] can mean "conditioner," the cause that conditions. It can also mean "condition," the result of the action of conditioning. Finally, it can mean "conditioning," the activity or process of conditioning.

As the second link of the formula of Dependent Origination (*paṭicca samuppāda*), *saṁkhāra* has an active aspect and signifies *kamma*, that is, wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) volitional activity (*cetanā*) of body, speech, or mind. The term "*kamma*-formation" describes this aspect of *saṁkhāra*.

Saṁkhāra is the imprint left behind by past actions, that is to say that everything we think, say, or do leaves a residue of conditioning in the mind — these are the "predisposing mental formations," or simply "mental formations," that constitute the fourth aggregate (*saṁkhārakkhandha*). The slightest thought has consequences, as does the slightest act. Over the years, it is the sum of all these consequences, large and small, that shapes our lives.

Saṁkhāra is what impels us to continue experiencing sense stimuli. Everything we see, hear, taste, smell, feel, or think as a result of contact of the senses with an object is conditioned by the force of past *kamma* or *saṁkhāra*. This means that we cannot help being controlled by our *saṁkhāras*; we have no way of avoiding the *kamma* of our nature. However, the way in which we react to new sense stimuli does not necessarily

[561] Sanskrit *saṁskāra*.

have to be conditioned by *saṁkhāra* — we have a choice. We can either face our *saṁkhāras* squarely, or we can turn around and give up.

There are three possible ways of reacting to a new sensory contact: (1) skillful (*kusala*) reaction; (2) unskillful (*akusala*) reaction; and (3) neutral (*avyākata*) reaction. Neutral reaction is practically possible only for an *Arahant*, that is, for someone who experiences neither greed (*lobha*) nor anger (*dosa*) and whose mind is not clouded by any form of delusion (*moha*) about the Four Noble Truths. Skillful reaction, however, lies within the power of every intelligent being. In order to be able to react skillfully, one has to have control not only over one's own physical and verbal actions, but also over one's mind.

Thoughts are the very source of *kamma*, for from our thoughts flows everything: words, actions, desires, decisions, destiny. The source of all *kamma* is self-will, the deep, driving desire for personal satisfaction.

Past and future are both contained in every present moment. Whatever we are today is the result of what we have thought, spoken, and done in the past — just as what we shall be tomorrow is the result of what we think, say, and do today. That is the real implication of the law of *kamma*, and it puts the responsibility for both present and future squarely in our hands.

> *"All beings are the owners of their deeds. Every deed, both wholesome and unwholesome, committed by oneself is one's own property. They follow one throughout the whole of one's life."*

Every single negative thing we have ever thought or done has ultimately arisen from our grasping at a false self and our cherishing of that self, making it the dearest and most important element in our lives. All those negative thoughts, emotions, desires, and actions that are the cause of our negative *kamma* are engendered by self-grasping and self-cherishing. They are the dark, powerful magnet that attracts to us, life after life, every obstacle, every misfortune, every anguish, every disaster, and, accordingly, they are the root cause of all the sufferings of *saṁsāra*. ■

26

The Nature of Kamma

"As you sow the seed, so shall you reap the fruit."[562]

The Responsibility for Both Present and Future is in Our Own Hands

Is one bound to reap all that one has sown in just proportion? Not necessarily! In the *Anguttara Nikāya*, 3 2.5(10), Loṇakapallavaggo — 9, Loṇakapallasuttaṁ, the *Buddha* states:

> *"If anyone says that a man must reap according to his deeds, in that case, there is no religious life nor is an opportunity afforded for the entire extinction of sorrow. But, if anyone says that what a man reaps accords with his deeds, in that case, there is a religious life and an opportunity is afforded for the entire extinction of sorrow."*

In Buddhism, therefore, there is every possibility to mold one's *kamma*.

Although it is stated in the *Dhammapada*[563] that "not in the sky, nor in the ocean, nor entering a mountain cave is found that place on earth, where abiding, one may escape (from the consequences of) an evil deed," yet, one is not bound to pay all the arrears of past *kamma*. If such were the case, emancipation would be an impossibility. Eternal suffering would be the unfortunate result.

One is neither the master nor the servant of this *kamma*. Even the most vicious person can, by his own effort, become the most virtuous person. We are always becoming something, and that something depends on our own actions. We may, at any moment, change for the better or for the worse. Even the most wicked person should not be discouraged or despised on account of his evil nature. He should be pitied, for those who censure him may also have been in the same position at one time. Just as they have changed for the better, he may also change — perhaps even sooner than they. Who knows what good *kamma* he has in store for him? Who knows his potential goodness?

Angulimāla, a highway robber and the murderer of more than a thousand of his fellow beings, became an *Arahant* and erased, so to speak, all his past misdeeds.

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[562] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.
[563] *Dhammapada*, IX, Evil, verse 127.

Āḷavaka, the fierce demon who feasted on the flesh of human beings, gave up his carnivorous habits and attained the first stage of Sainthood.

Ambapālī, a courtesan, purified her character and attained Arahantship.

Asoka,[564] who was stigmatized as Caṇḍa (The Wicked), owing to the ruthlessness with which he expanded his Empire, became Dharmāśoka, or "Asoka the Righteous," and changed his ways to such an extent that today, "Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses, serenities and royal highnesses, and the like, the name of Asoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star."[565]

These are but a few striking examples that serve to show how a complete transformation of character can be brought about by sheer determination.

It may so happen that, in some cases, a lesser evil may produce its due effect, while the effect of a greater evil will be minimized. The *Buddha* said:

> *"Here, O Bhikkhus, a certain person is not disciplined in body, in morality, in mind, in wisdom, has little good and less virtue, and lives painfully in consequence of trifling misdeeds. Even a trivial act committed by such a person will lead him to a state of misery.*
>
> *"Here, O Bhikkhus, a certain person is disciplined in body, in morality, in mind, in wisdom, does much good, is virtuous, and lives with boundless compassion towards all. A similar evil committed by such a person ripens in this life itself, and not even a small effect manifests itself (after death), not to say of a Great One.*[566]
>
> *"It is as if a man were to put of lump of salt into a small cup of water. What do you think, O Bhikkhus? Would now the small amount of water in this cup become salty and undrinkable?"*
>
> *"Yes, Lord."*
>
> *"And why?"*
>
> *"Because, Lord, there was very little water in the cup, and, so, it became salty and undrinkable by this lump of salt."*
>
> *"Suppose a man were to put a lump of salt in the river Ganges. What do you think, O Bhikkhus? Would now the river Ganges become salty and undrinkable by the lump of salt?"*
>
> *"Nay, indeed, Lord."*
>
> *"And why not?"*
>
> *"Because, Lord, the amount of water in the river Ganges is great, and, so, it would not become salty and undrinkable."*
>
> *"In exactly the same way, we may have the case of a person who does some slight evil deed which brings him to a state of misery, or, again, we may*

[564] Sanskrit *Aśoka*.
[565] H. G. Wells, *Outline of History*.
[566] The reference is to an *Arahant*, who is not subject to any future sorrow.

have the case of another person who does the same trivial misdeed, yet he expiates (after death), not to say of a Great One.

"We may have the case of a person who is cast into prison for the theft of a half-penny, of a penny, or of a hundred pence, or, again, we may have the case of a person who is not cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence.

"Who is it who is cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence?

"Whenever anyone is poor, needy, and indigent, he is cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence.

"Who is it who is not cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence?

"Whenever anyone is rich, wealthy, and affluent, he is not cast into prison for a half-penny, for a penny, or for a hundred pence.

"In exactly the same way, we may have the case of a person who does some slight evil deed which brings him to a state of misery, or, again, we may have the case of another person who does the same trivial misdeed and expiates it in the present life. Not even a small effect manifests itself (after death), not to say of a Great One."[567]

Cause of Adverse Results

Good begets good, but any subsequent regrets on the part of the doer regarding the good done deprive him of the due desirable results. The following case may be cited in illustration:

On one occasion, King Pasenadi of Kosala approached the *Buddha* and said:

"Lord, here in Sāvatthī, a millionaire householder has died. He has left no son behind him, and, now, I come here, after having conveyed his property to the palace. Lord, a hundred lakhs in gold, to say nothing of the silver. But this millionaire householder used to eat broken scraps of food and sour gruel. And how did he clothe himself? For dress, he wore robes of coarse hemp, and, as for his coach, he drove a broken-down cart rigged up with an awning made of leaves."

Thereupon, the *Buddha* replied:

"Even so, O King, even so. In a former life, O King, this millionaire householder gave alms of food to a Pacceka Buddha called Tagarasikhi. Later, he regretted having given the food, saying to himself: 'It would be better if my servants and

[567] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part I.

workmen ate the food I gave for alms.' And, besides this, he deprived his brother's only son of his life for the sake of his property. Now, because this millionaire householder gave alms of food to the Pacceka Buddha Tagarasikhi, in requital for this deed, he was reborn seven times in heavenly blissful states. And, by residual result of that same action, he became a millionaire seven times in this very Sāvatthī.

"And, because this millionaire householder regretted having given alms, saying to himself: 'It would be better if my servants and workmen ate the food I gave for alms,' therefore, as a requital for this deed, he had no appreciation of good food, no appreciation of fine clothes, no appreciation of an elegant vehicle, and no appreciation of the enjoyment of the five senses.

"And, because this millionaire householder slew the only son of his brother for the sake of his property, as requital for this deed, he had to suffer many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years, many hundreds of thousands of years of pain in states of misery. And, by the residual of that same action, he is without a son for the seventh time, and, in consequence of this, had to leave his property to the royal treasury."[568]

This millionaire obtained his vast fortune as a result of the good act done in a past birth, but, since he regretted having done this good deed, he could not fully enjoy the benefit of the riches that *kamma* had provided him.

Beneficent and Maleficent Forces

In the working of *kamma*, it should be understood that there are beneficent and maleficent forces to counteract and support this self-operating law. Birth (*jāti*), time or conditions (*kāla*), personality or appearance (*upadhi*), and effort (*payoga*) are such aids and hindrances to the fruition of *kamma*.

If, for instance, a person is born in a noble family or in a state of happiness, his fortunate birth will sometimes hinder the fruition of his evil *kamma*.

If, on the other hand, he is born in a state of misery or in an unfortunate family, his unfavorable birth will provide an easy opportunity for his evil *kamma* to operate.

These are technically known as *jāti sampatti* (favorable birth) and *jāti vipatti* (unfavorable birth).

An unintelligent person, who, by some good *kamma*, is born in a royal family, will, on account of his noble parentage, be honored by the people. If the same person were to have a less fortunate birth, he would not be similarly treated.

King Duṭṭhagamani of Śri Lanka, for instance, acquired evil *kamma* by waging war with the Tamils, and good *kamma* by his various religious and social deeds. Owing to his good Reproductive *kamma*, he was born in a heavenly blissful state. Tradition says

[568] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Part I.

that he will have his last birth in the time of the future *Buddha* Metteyya. His evil *kamma* cannot, therefore, successfully operate owing to his favorable birth.

To cite another example, King Ajātasattu, who killed his father, King Bimbisāra, later became distinguished for his piety and devotion, owing to his association with the *Buddha*. After dying, King Ajātasattu had to suffer in a woeful state as a result of his heinous crime. During that time, he was not able to enjoy the benefits of the good deeds he performed after having killed his father.

Beauty and ugliness are two other factors that favor and hinder the working of *kamma*.

If, by some good *kamma*, a person obtains a happy birth but unfortunately is deformed, he will not be able fully to enjoy the beneficial results of his good *kamma*. Even a legitimate heir to the throne may not, perhaps, be raised to that exalted position if he happens to be physically deformed.

Beauty, on the other hand, will be an asset to the possessor. A good-looking son of poor parents may attract the attention of others and may be able to distinguish himself through their influence.

Favorable time or occasion and unfavorable time or occasion are two other factors that affect the working of *kamma*; the one aids, and the other impedes the working of *kamma*.

In the case of a famine, all, without exception, will be compelled to suffer the same fate. Here, the unfavorable conditions open up possibilities for evil *kamma* to operate. The favorable conditions, on the other hand, will prevent the operation of evil *kamma*.

Of these beneficent and maleficent forces, the most important is effort. In the working of *kamma*, effort or lack of effort plays a great part. By present effort, one can create fresh *kamma*, new surroundings, new environment, and even a new world. Though placed in the most favorable circumstances and provided with all facilities, if one makes no strenuous effort, one not only misses golden opportunities but may also ruin oneself. Personal effort is essential for both worldly and spiritual progress.

If a person makes no effort to cure himself of a disease or to save himself from his difficulties or to strive with diligence for his progress, his evil *kamma* will find a suitable opportunity to produce its due effects. If, on the contrary, he endeavors on his part to surmount his difficulties, to better his circumstances, to make the best use of the rare opportunities, to strive strenuously for his real progress, his good *kamma* will come to his aid.

When ship-wrecked at sea, the Bodhisatta Mahā Janaka made a great effort to save himself, while the others prayed to the gods and left their fate in their hands. The result was that the *Bodhisatta* escaped, while the others were drowned.

These two important factors are technically known as *payoga sampatti* (favorable effort) and *payoga vipatti* (unfavorable effort).

Though we are neither absolutely the servants nor the masters of our *kamma*, it is evident from these counteractive and supportive factors that the fruition of *kamma* is influenced to some extent by external circumstances, surroundings, personality,

individual striving, and the like. It is this aspect of *kamma* that gives consolation, hope, reliance, and moral courage to Buddhists.

We Own Our Kamma

When the unexpected happens, when difficulties, failures, and misfortunes confront a Buddhist, he realizes that he is reaping what he himself has sown and is wiping off a past debt. Instead of resigning himself, leaving everything to *kamma*, he makes a strenuous effort to pull out the weeds and sow useful seeds in their place, for the future is in his own hands.

He who believes in *kamma* does not condemn even the most corrupt, for they have their chance to reform themselves at any moment. Though bound to suffer in woeful states, they have the hope of attaining eternal peace. By their deeds, they create their own hells, and by their own deeds, they can also create their own heavens.

A Buddhist who is fully convinced of the law of *kamma* does not pray to another to be saved but confidently relies on himself for his emancipation. Instead of making any self-surrender or propitiating any supernatural agency, he relies on his own willpower and works unceasingly for the good and happiness of all.

This belief in *kamma* "validates his effort and kindles his enthusiasm," because it teaches individual responsibility.

To an ordinary Buddhist, *kamma* serves as a deterrent, while, to an intellectual, it serves as an incentive to do good.

This law of *kamma* explains the problem of suffering, the mystery of the so-called "fate" and "predestination" of some religions and, above all, the inequality of mankind.

We are the architects of our own fate. We are our own creators. We are our own destroyers. We build our own heavens. We build our own hells.

What we think, speak, or do, become our own. It is these thoughts, words, and deeds that assume the name of *kamma* and pass from life to life exalting and degrading us in the course of our wanderings in *saṁsāra*.

As the *Dhammapada* says:[569]

> *"Perceiving the results of past wrong actions, those who have done evil suffer — those who have done evil are afflicted; indeed, they suffer here and now, even after death they suffer — they suffer in both places.*
>
> *"Perceiving the results of past wholesome actions, those who have done good deeds rejoice, they rejoice exceedingly; indeed, they rejoice here and now, even after death they rejoice — they rejoice in both places."* ■

[569] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verses 15—16.

27

What is the Origin of Life?

"Inconceivable is the beginning, O Monks, of this faring on. The earliest point is not revealed of the running on, the faring on of beings, cloaked in ignorance, tied by craving."[570]

First Cause

Rebirth, which Buddhists do not regard as a mere theory but as a fact verifiable by evidence, forms a fundamental tenet of Buddhism, though its goal, *nibbāna*, is attainable in this life itself. The "*Bodhisatta* Ideal" and the correlative doctrine of freedom to attain utter perfection are based upon the doctrine of rebirth.

The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth should be differentiated from the theory of transmigration and reincarnation of other philosophies and religions, because Buddhism denies the existence of a transmigrating permanent soul created by a God or emanating from a *paramātma* (Divine Essence).

It is *kamma* that conditions rebirth. Past *kamma* conditions the present birth, and present *kamma*, in combination with past *kamma*, conditions the future. The present is thus the offspring of the past and becomes, in turn, the parent of the future.

The actuality of the present needs no proof, since it is self-evident. The actuality of the past is based on memory and report, and that of the future is based on forethought and inference.

If we postulate a past, a present, and a future life, then, we are at once faced with the problem — What is the ultimate origin of life?

Some religions, in attempting to solve this problem, postulate a first cause, whether as a cosmic force or as an Almighty Being. Others deny a first cause for, in common experience, the cause ever becomes the effect and the effect the cause. In a circle of cause and effect, a first cause[571] is inconceivable. According to the former, life has had a beginning, according to the latter, it is beginningless. To some, the concept of a first cause is as ridiculous as a round triangle or a square circle.

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[570] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

[571] "There is no reason that the world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is due to the poverty of our imagination." Bertrand Russell, *Why I am not a Christian* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster [1957]), p. 7.

One might argue that life must have had a beginning in the infinite past and that the beginning, or the First Cause, is the Creator. In that case, there is no reason why the same demand may not be made of this postulated Creator.

With respect to this alleged First Cause, men have held widely different views. In interpreting this First Cause, Paramātma, Brahmā, Īśvara, Jehovah (Yahweh [יהוה]), God, the Almighty, 'Allâh (الله), Supreme Being, Ahura Mazda, Father in Heaven, Creator, Order of Heaven, Prime Mover, Uncaused Cause, Divine Essence, Chance, Pakati, Padhāna, are some significant terms employed by certain religions and philosophies.

Hinduism traces the origin of life to a mystical *paramātma* from which emanate all *ātmas*, or souls, which transmigrate from existence to existence until they are finally reabsorbed in *paramātma*. One might question whether there is any possibility for these reabsorbed *ātmas* for a further transmigration.

Christianity, admitting the possibility of an ultimate origin, attributes everything to the fiat of an Almighty God.

Dogmatic writers of olden times authoritatively declared that God created man after his own image. Some modern thinkers, on the other hand, have stated that man created God after his own image. With the growth of civilization, man's conception of God has grown more and more refined.[572] There is, at present, a tendency to substitute an impersonal God for the personal God of former times, though certain fundamentalists still adhere to the old concepts.

It is, however, impossible to conceive of such an omnipotent, omnipresent being, an epitome of everything that is good, either within or outside the universe.

Modern science endeavors to tackle the problem with its limited systematized knowledge. According to the scientific standpoint, we are the direct products of the sperm and ovum produced by our parents. But science does not give a satisfactory explanation with regard to the development of the mind, which is infinitely more important than the machinery of man's material body. Scientists, while asserting *Omne vivum ex vivō*, "all life from life," maintain that life ultimately is derived from lifeless chemical processes.

Now, from the scientific point of view, we are absolutely born from our parents. Thus, our lives are necessarily preceded by those of our parents, and so on. In this way, life is preceded by life until one goes back to the first protoplasm or celloid. As regards the exact origin of this first protoplasm or celloid, however, scientists can only guess.

Buddhist Attitude concerning the Origin of Life

What, then, is the attitude of Buddhism regarding the origin of life?

At the outset, it should be stated that the *Buddha* did not attempt to solve all the ethical and philosophical problems that concern mankind. Nor did He deal with

[572] See Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York, NY: Knopf [1993]).

speculations and theories that tend neither to edification nor to Enlightenment. Nor did He demand blind faith from His followers regarding a First Cause. He was chiefly concerned with one practical and specific problem — that of suffering (*dukkha*) and its destruction. All side issues not related to this problem were completely ignored.

On one occasion, a *Bhikkhu* named Mālunkyāputta, not content to lead the Holy Life and achieve emancipation by degrees, approached the *Buddha* and impatiently demanded an immediate solution of some questions, with the threat of discarding his monk's robes if no satisfactory answer was given.

> *"Lord, while I was alone in meditation, the following thought arose in my mind: 'These theories have not been elucidated, have been set aside, and have been rejected by the Exalted One … If He does not explain these to me, then, I will abandon the Holy Life and return to the life of a lay person.' If the Blessed One knows whether the world is eternal or not eternal; whether the world is finite or infinite; whether the life-principle is the same as the body or whether the life-principle is one thing and the body is another; whether the Tathāgata exists or does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death — in that case, let the Blessed One explain these to me.*
>
> *"If the Blessed One does not know whether the world is eternal or not eternal; whether the world is finite or infinite; whether the life-principle is the same as the body or whether the life-principle is one thing and the body is another; whether the Tathāgata exists or does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; whether the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death — in that case, certainly, for one who does not know and lacks the insight, the only proper thing is to say: 'I do not know, I do not have the insight'."*

Calmly, the *Buddha* questioned the erring *Bhikkhu* whether his adoption of the Holy Life was in any way conditional upon the solution of such problems. "Nay, Lord," Mālunkyāputta replied. The *Buddha* then admonished him not to waste time and energy over idle speculations detrimental to his moral progress and said:

> *"Now then, Mālunkyāputta, did I ever say to you: 'Come, Mālunkyāputta, lead the Holy Life under me, and I will declare to you that the world is eternal or not eternal; that the world is finite or infinite; that the life-principle is the same as the body or the life-principle is one thing and the body is another; that the Tathāgata exists or does not exist after death; that the Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death; that the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death?'"*
>
> *"No, Venerable Sir."*

"Did you ever tell me: 'I will lead the Holy Life under the Blessed One, and the Blessed One will declare to me this world is eternal ... or, after death, the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist?'"

"No, Venerable Sir."

"That being so, misguided man, who are you, and what are you abandoning?

"If anyone should say thus: 'I will not lead the Holy Life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One declares to me that this world is eternal or not eternal ... or that, after death, the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,' that would still remain undeclared by the Tathāgata, and, meanwhile, that person would die.

"It is as if, Mālunkyāputta, a person were wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison and his friends and companions, his kinsman and relatives brought a doctor to treat him and he should say to the doctor: 'I shall not allow this arrow to be extracted until I know the name and caste of the man who wounded me; ... until I know whether the man who wounded me was tall or short or of medium height; ... until I know whether the man who wounded me was dark or brown or golden-skinned; ... until I know whether the man who wounded me lives in such a village or town or city; ... until I know whether the bow that wounded me was a long bow or a crossbow; ... until I know whether the bow-string that wounded me was fiber or reed or sinew or hemp or bark; ... until I know whether the shaft that wounded me was wild or cultivated; ... until I know with what kind of feathers the shaft that wounded me was fitted — whether those of a vulture or a crow or a hawk or a peacock or a stork; ... until I know with what kind of sinew the shaft that wounded me was bound — whether that of an ox or a buffalo or a lion or a monkey; ... until I know what kind of arrow it was that wounded me — whether it was hoof-tipped or curved or barbed or calf-toothed or oleander.' That person would die before this would ever be known by him. In the same way, Mālunkyāputta, if anyone should say thus: 'I will not lead the Holy Life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One declares to me that this world is eternal or not eternal ... or that, after death, the Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist,' that person would die before these questions had ever been elucidated by the Tathāgata."[573]

According to Buddhism, we are born from the matrix of action (*kammayoni*). Our parents merely provide us with a material component. Therefore, being precedes being, life precedes life. At the moment of conception, it is *kamma* that conditions the initial consciousness that vitalizes the fetus. It is this invisible karmic energy, generated from past births, that produces mental phenomena and the phenomena of life in an already extant physical phenomena to complete the set of three components that constitutes a human being.

[573] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Bhikkhuvagga, Cūḷa Mālunkya Sutta, no. 63.

Dealing with the conception of beings, the *Buddha* states:

> *"Where three are found in combination, then, a germ of life is planted there. If mother and father come together, but it is not the mother's fertile period, and the being-to-be-born (gandhabba) is not present, then, no germ of life is planted. If mother and father come together and it is the mother's fertile period, but the being-to-be-born is not present, then, again, no germ of life is planted. If mother and father come together and it is the mother's fertile period, and the being-to-be-born is present, then, by the conjunction of these three, a germ of life is planted there."*[574]

Here, *gandhabba* (also spelled *gantabba*) does not mean "a class of *devas* said to preside over the process of conception"[575] but refers to a suitable being ready to be born in a particular womb. This term is used only in regard to this particular conception and must not be mistaken for a permanent soul.

For a being to be born here, somewhere, a being must die. The birth of a being, which strictly means the arising of the five aggregates (*khandhānaṁ pātubhāvo*), or psychophysical phenomena in this present life, corresponds to the death of a being in a past life; just as, in conventional terms, the rising of the sun in one place means the setting of the sun in another place. This enigmatic statement may be better understood by imagining life as a wave and not as a straight line. Birth and death are only two phases of the same process. Birth precedes death, and death, on the other hand, precedes birth. This constant succession of birth and death connection, with each individual life-flux, constitutes what is technically known as *saṁsāra* — "recurrent wandering," "cyclic existence."[576]

What is the ultimate origin of life? The *Buddha* positively declares:

> *"Without cognizable beginning is this saṁsāra. The earliest point of beings, who, obstructed by ignorance and fettered by craving, wander and fare on, is not to be perceived."*

This life-stream flows on *ad infinitum*, as long as it is fed by the muddy waters of ignorance and craving. When these two are completely cut off, then only does the life-stream cease to flow; rebirth ends, as in the case of *Buddhas* and *Arahants*. A first beginning of this life-stream cannot be determined, as a stage cannot be perceived when this life force was not fraught with ignorance and craving.

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[574] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Mahāyamakavagga, Mahātanhāsaṁkhaya Sutta, no. 38. Although wick and oil may be present, yet, an external fire must be introduced to produce a flame.

[575] Cf. F. L. Woodward, *Some Sayings of the Buddha*, p. 40.

[576] The *Atthasālinī* defines *saṁsāra* thus: "*Saṁsāra* is the unbroken succession of aggregates, elements, and sense-bases." According to Nyānatiloka Thera: "Inconceivable is the beginning of this *saṁsāra*, not to be discovered is a first beginning of beings, who, obstructed by ignorance and ensnared by craving, are hurrying and hastening through this round of rebirths."

It should be understood that the *Buddha* has here referred merely to the beginning of the life-stream of living beings. It is left to scientists to speculate on the origin and evolution of the universe. ■

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28

The Buddha and the So-called "Creator God"

"I count your Brahmā among one of the unjust, who made a world in which to shelter wrong."[577]

No Creator God

The Pāḷi equivalent for the Creator God in other religions is either *Issara*[578] or *Brahmā*. In the *Tipiṭaka*, there is absolutely no reference whatsoever to the existence of a Creator God. On several occasions, the *Buddha* denied the existence of a permanent soul (*attā*). As to the denial of a Creator God, there are only a few references. The *Buddha* never admitted the existence of a Creator God, whether in the form of a force or a supernatural being.

Despite the fact that the *Buddha* placed no supernatural God over man, some scholars have asserted that the *Buddha* was characteristically silent on this important controversial question. The following quotations will clearly indicate the viewpoint of the *Buddha* towards the concept of a Creator God.

In the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the *Buddha* speaks of three divergent views that prevailed during His time. One of these was: "Whatever happiness or pain or neutral feeling this person experiences, all that is due to the creation of a Supreme Deity (*issaranimmānahetu*)."

According to this view, we are what we were willed to be by a Creator. Our destinies rest entirely in his hands. Our fate is preordained by him. The supposed freewill granted to his creation is obviously false.

Criticizing this fatalistic view, the *Buddha* says:

"So, then, owing to the creation of a Supreme Deity, men will become murderers, thieves, unchaste, liars, slanderers, abusive, babblers, covetous, malicious, and perverse in view. Thus, for those who fall back on the creation of a God as the

[577] Bhūridatta Jātaka (no. 543).
[578] Sanskrit *Īśvara*.

essential reason, there is neither desire nor effort nor necessity to do this deed or to abstain from that deed."

In the Devadaha Sutta,[579] the *Buddha*, referring to the self-mortification of the naked ascetics, remarks:

"If, O Bhikkhus, beings experience pain and happiness as the result of God's creation, then, certainly, these naked ascetics must have been created by a wicked God, since they suffer such terrible pain."

The Kevaḍḍha Sutta[580] narrates a humorous conversation that occurred between an inquisitive *Bhikkhu* and the supposed Creator. A *Bhikkhu*, desiring to know the end of the elements, approached Mahā Brahmā and questioned him thus:

"Where, my friend, do the four great elements — earth, water, fire, and air — cease, leaving no trace behind?" To this, the Great Brahmā replied: "I, brother, am Brahmā, Great Brahmā, the Supreme Being, the Unsurpassed, the Chief, the Victor, the Ruler, the Father of all beings who have been or are to be."

For the second time, the *Bhikkhu* repeated his question, and the Great Brahmā gave the same reply. When the *Bhikkhu* questioned him for the third time, the Great Brahmā took the *Bhikkhu* by the arm, led him aside, and made a frank utterance:

"O Brother, these gods of my retinue believe as follows: 'Brahmā sees all things, knows all things, has penetrated all things.' Therefore was it that I did not answer you in their presence. I do not know, O Brother, where these four great elements — earth, water, fire, and air — cease, leaving no trace behind. Therefore, it was an evil and a crime, O Brother, that you left the Blessed One and went elsewhere in quest of an answer to this question. Turn back, O Brother, and, having drawn near to the Blessed One, ask Him this question, and, as the Blessed One shall explain to you, so believe."

Tracing the origin of Mahā Brahmā, the so-called "Creator God," the *Buddha* comments in the Pāṭika Sutta:[581]

"On this, O disciples, that being who was first born [in a new world evolution] thinks thus: 'I am Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Vanquisher, the All-Seer, the Disposer, the Master of Myself, the Father of all who are and are to be. By me are these beings created. And why is this so? A while ago, I thought:

[579] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Devadahavagga, Devadaha Sutta, no. 101.
[580] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Sīlakkhandhavagga, Kevaḍḍha Sutta, no. 11.
[581] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Pāṭikavagga, Pāṭika Sutta, no. 24.

Would that other beings, too, might come to this state of being! Such was the aspiration of my mind, and, lo!, these beings did come'.

"And those beings themselves who arose after him, they, too, think thus: 'This Worthy must be Brahmā, the Great Brahmā, the Vanquisher, the All-Seer, the Disposer, the Lord, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Assigner, the Master of Himself, the Father of all who are and are to be.'

"On this, O disciples, that being who arose first becomes longer lived, more handsome, and more powerful, but those who appeared after him become shorter lived, less comely, less powerful. And it might well be, O disciples, that some other being, on passing away from that state, would be born in this state [on earth] and, so come, he might go forth from the household life into the homeless state. And, having thus gone forth, by reason of ardor, effort, devotion, earnestness, and perfect intellect, he might reach up to such rapt concentration that, with rapt mind, he calls to mind his former dwelling place, but does not remember what went before. He says thus: 'That Worshipful Brahmā, the Vanquisher, the All-Seer, the Disposer, the Lord, the Maker, the Creator, the Chief, the Assigner, the Master of Himself, the Father of all who are and are to be, he by whom we were created, he is permanent, constant, eternal, unchanging, and he will remain forever and ever. But we who were created by that Brahmā, we have come hither, all impermanent, transient, unstable, short-lived, destined to pass away.'

"Thus was appointed the beginning of all things, which you, sirs, declare as your traditional doctrine, to wit, that it has been wrought by an over-lord, by Brahmā."

In the Bhūridatta Jātaka (no. 543), the *Bodhisatta* questions the supposed divine justice of the Creator as follows:

"He who has eyes can see the sickening sight. Why does not Brahmā set his creatures right?"

"If his wide power is unrestrained by any limits, why is his hand so rarely spread to bless?"

"Why are his creatures all condemned to pain? Why does he not give happiness to all?"

"Why do fraud, lies, and ignorance prevail? Why does falsehood triumph — [why do] truth and justice fail?"

"I count your Brahmā among one of the unjust, who made a world in which to shelter wrong."

Refuting the theory that everything is the creation of a Supreme Being, the *Bodhisatta* states in the Mahābodhi Jātaka (no. 528).

> *"If there exists some Lord all powerful to fulfill in every creature bliss or woe, and action good or ill, that Lord is stained with sin. Man does but work his will."*

The phenomenality and egolessness of existence, as well as the denial of a Creator God, have been beautifully expressed in three verses of the *Visuddhimagga*:

> *No doer of the deeds is found,*
> *No one who ever reaps their fruits;*
> *Empty phenomena roll on:*
> *This alone is the correct view.*
>
> *And, while the deeds and their results*
> *Roll on and on, conditioned all,*
> *There is no first cause to be found,*
> *Just as it is with seed and tree ...*
>
> *No God, no Brahmā, can be called*
> *The creator of this wheel of life:*
> *Empty phenomena roll on,*
> *Dependent upon conditions all.*

The God-Idea[582]

To trace the development of the God-idea, one must go back to the time when civilization was still in its infancy, and modern science was unknown. Primitive people, out of fear of and admiration towards natural phenomena, believed in different spirits and gods. They used their belief in spirits and gods to create religious mythologies of their own. According to their respective circumstances and understanding capacity, different people worshipped different gods and created different mythologies.

In the beginning, people worshipped many gods — gods of fire, trees, streams, lightning, storms, winds, the sun, and other natural phenomena. Then, gradually, people began to attribute the physical and mental characteristic of human beings to these gods. Human attributes such as love, hatred, jealousy, fear, pride, envy, and other emotions were assigned to them. From all these gods, there slowly grew a realization that the phenomena of the universe were not many but were one. This understanding gave rise to the monotheistic religions of recent times.

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[582] Adapted from "The God-Idea," in K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society [fourth edition 1987]), pp. 259—264.

In the process of development, the God-idea went through a variety of changing social and intellectual views. The God-idea was regarded by different people in different ways. Some idealized God as the King of Heaven and Earth; thus, they had a conception of God as a ruler. Others thought of God as an abstract principle. Some raised the ideal of a Supreme Deity to the highest heaven, while others brought it down to the lowest depths of the earth. Some pictured God in a paradise, while others made an idol and worshipped it. Some went so far as to claim that there is no salvation without God — no matter how much good one does, one will not receive the fruits of one's actions unless one acts out of unconditional faith in God.

Even the monotheistic God of recent times has gone through a variety of changes among different people and during different periods of time.[583] The Hindu God is quite different from the Christian God. The Christian God is again different from the Gods of other faiths. Thus, numerous religions came into existence; each one differed from the others in the end, and each claimed that their God was the only "True God."

As each religion came into existence and developed around its own version of the God-idea, each developed its own particular explanation of creation. Thus, different creation mythologies came into existence.

Nowadays, intelligent people, who have carefully reviewed all of the available facts, have come to the conclusion that, like the God-idea itself, the creation myths must be regarded as a development of the human imagination that began as a misunderstanding of natural phenomena. This misunderstanding was rooted in fear and ignorance. In view of recent scientific discoveries, these creation myths have been shown to have no factual basis.

If man was created by some external agent, then he must belong to that agent and not to himself. Buddhists do not believe that man came into existence in human form through any external agent. Instead, they believe that man is here today due to his own past actions. According to Buddhism, man is responsible for everything he does. He is neither rewarded nor punished by some external agent but, rather, reaps the results of what he himself has done through his own wholesome or unwholesome verbal, physical, and mental actions. Buddhism accepts that human beings arose through the process of evolution. Moreover, the scientific discovery of the gradual development of the universe conforms with the *Buddha's* Teachings.

Both the concept of God and its associated creation myths have been defended by believers who feel that they need these ideas to justify their own existence and purpose. All of these believers claim to have received their respective scriptures as revelation; in other words, they claim that these scriptures came directly from God. Each God-religion claims, moreover, that it stands for universal peace and universal brotherhood and other such high ideals.

However great the ideals of these religions may be, their history, even up to the present day, has been marked by intolerance, hatred, persecution, torture, killing, and lies,

[583] For details, cf. Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York, NY: Gramercy Books [2004; originally published in 1993]).

in other words, repeated wrongdoing in the name of God. In this respect, the God-religions have failed in their attempt to benefit mankind. The time has come for them to realize that the way to benefit others is through love and understanding and not through the spreading of superstition.

Dr. Gunapala Dharmasiri, in his book *A Buddhist Critique of the Christian Concept of God* (1974 [reprinted 1988]), stated: "I see that though the notion of God contains sublime moral strands, it also has certain implications that are extremely dangerous to humans as well as to other beings on this planet."

God-religions offer no salvation without God. Thus, a man might conceivably have climbed to the highest pinnacle of virtue, might have led a perfectly righteous way of life, and might even have achieved the highest level of holiness, yet he is to be condemned to eternal hell just because he did not believe in the existence of God. On the other hand, a man may have led a totally disreputable life, and yet, having made a late repentance, he can be forgiven and, therefore, "saved." From a Buddhist point of view, there is no justification for this kind of doctrine.

If the followers of various religions are going to quarrel among themselves and condemn other beliefs and practices — especially to prove or disprove the existence of God —, and, if they are going to harbor anger towards other religions because they adhere to different beliefs, then, they are merely creating and perpetuating disharmony among the various religious communities. It is our duty as responsible citizens of a world community to respect the rights of others to believe whatever they wish, even if we disagree with those beliefs. Respect is necessary for the sake of harmonious and peaceful living.

Was the Buddha an Incarnation of God?[584]

The *Buddha* was a unique human being who was self-enlightened. There was no one whom He could call His teacher. Through His own efforts, He practiced the ten supreme qualities, or "perfections" (*pāramitā*), of generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness, and equanimity. Through mental purification, He opened the doors to all knowledge. He knew all things to be known, cultivated all things to be cultivated, and destroyed all things to be destroyed. Indeed, there was not, nor has there since been, any other religious teacher comparable to Him in terms of cultivation and attainment.

So special was He and so electrifying was His message, that many people asked Him who or what He was. Questions about who He was were asked with respect to His place of birth, ancestry, and so on. Questions about what He was referred to the order of beings to which He belonged, that is, whether He was a human being, or a *yakkha*, or a *gandhabba*, or a *deva*, etc. So holy and inspiring was He that, even during His lifetime,

[584] Adapted from "Was Buddha an Incarnation of God?," in K. Sri Dhammananda, *What Buddhists Believe* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society [fourth edition 1987]), pp. 12—14.

there were attempts to turn Him into a god or a reincarnation of a god. Never did He agree to be regarded as such. After His Enlightenment, the *Buddha* could no longer be classified as an ordinary human being. Instead, He belonged to a special group of enlightened beings, all of whom are *Buddhas*.

Buddhas appear in this world from time to time. But some people have the mistaken idea that it is the same *Buddha* who is reincarnated or who appears in the world over and over again. Actually, they are not the same person; otherwise, there could be no possibility for others to attain to Buddhahood. Buddhists believe that anyone can become a *Buddha* if he develops the necessary qualities to perfection and is able to remove ignorance completely through his own efforts. After Enlightenment, all *Buddhas* are similar in their attainment and experience of *nibbāna*.

In India, the followers of many orthodox religious groups tried to condemn the *Buddha* because of His liberal teachings, which revolutionized Indian society. Many regarded Him as an enemy when increasing numbers of intellectuals as well as people from all ranks of society become His followers. When they failed in their attempt to discredit Him, they adopted the reverse strategy of introducing Him as a reincarnation of one of their gods. This way, they could absorb Buddhism into their religion. To a certain extent, this strategy worked, since, through the centuries, it contributed to the decay and subsequent uprooting of Buddhism from the land of its origin.

Even to this day, there are those who try to use the Teachings of the *Buddha* as propaganda in order to gain converts among Buddhists. One tactic that they have used is to claim that the *Buddha* Himself predicted that another *Buddha* would appear in the world and that the latest *Buddha* would be even more popular. One group named a religious teacher[585] who lived in the eighth century CE as the latest *Buddha*. Another group maintained that the next *Buddha* had already arrived in Japan in the thirteenth century CE.[586] These, and other groups like them, tried to persuade Buddhists to give up their "old *Buddha*" and follow the so-called "new *Buddha*." Attempts such as these to convert Buddhists to another faith by misrepresenting the truth are reprehensible.

Those who claim that the new *Buddha* has already arrived are obviously misrepresenting what the *Buddha* said. Although the *Buddha* predicted the coming of the next *Buddha*, He mentioned several conditions that had to be met before this could take place. It is the nature of Buddhahood that the next *Buddha* will not appear as long as the

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[585] The reference here is to Padmasambhava, a contemporary of the Tibetan king Trisong Detsen (755—797 CE) and one of the founders of Tibetan Buddhism. He left his imprint particularly on the Nyingmapa School and is venerated by his followers as the "second *Buddha*." Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), pp. 257—258.

[586] The reference here is to Nichiren (1222—1282 CE), founder of the Nichiren School (also called the "New Lotus School") of Japanese Buddhism. For Nichiren, the teachings of Buddhism found their highest expression in the *Lotus Sūtra*. He believed that the teachings found in this scripture alone could lead mankind to Liberation. Nichiren, who relentlessly criticized all other Buddhist schools, saw himself as the savior of his nation. Because of his uncompromising advocacy of his own views, he was condemned to death, but his life was spared, and, instead, he was exiled to the small island of Sado. In 1274 CE, he was allowed to return to Kamakura. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), pp. 245—246.

dispensation of the current *Buddha* still exists. He will appear only when the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path have been completely forgotten. The people living then must be properly guided in order to understand the same Truth taught by the previous *Buddhas*. Inasmuch as we are still living within the dispensation of the Buddha Gotama, the time has not yet come for the next *Buddha* to appear.

Tolerance in Religion[587]

The religions in which it is a cardinal point of faith that they, and they alone, hold the key to salvation and eternal life,[588] place themselves in a very special relationship to one another and to the whole of mankind. Their claim being one that involves the ultimate and absolute good of many will not, if it is held in all completeness and sincerity, admit of modification; nor can it be given a place that is secondary to anything else. Just as the brief span of life must be considered negligible against the measureless ocean of eternity, so the insignificant pattern of human affairs must necessarily be subordinated to the sole and ultimate good, which is of far greater consequence.

This type of religion sprang from tribal origins. In the first place, the salvation it offered — the hope of heavenly reward — was for the members of the tribe exclusively; its God was the unseen leader and real chief of the tribe. He might be a former chief deified, or his character might be purely mythical, or it might happen that a powerful local nature-spirit would be adopted as the God. However that might be, the God and the creed with its exclusive salvation were a binding force in the tribal units of primitive society. Combined, they instilled loyalty as a continuing influence through all the triumphs and reversals of tribal life. The human chiefs died or were killed in battle, but it did not matter; the real chief, the supernatural leader and protector, of whom the mortal chief was only the earthly representative, lived on. And so long as he lived, the tribe was held together.

Gradually, the tribes swelled and became nations, and the concept of the priest-king developed. It was the priest-king, as representative of the national deity, who made the laws and, from time to time, led the armies into war. Through their human surrogates, the gods did battle with one another, and the defeated tribe would be assimilated by the conqueror. The assimilation would take place in different ways, according to the degree of exclusiveness inherent in the tribal cult or the relative superiority or inferiority of victors and vanquished. Sometimes, there was identification, as when Jupiter and Amon became the composite deity, Jupiter-Amon, the horned god of Thebes; but as often, the god of the subjugated nation was outlawed. Among the Semites, Baal was driven out by Jehovah (Yahweh) and became a devil. In this particular instance, a real advance in civilization was made, for Jehovah, with all his faults, was

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[587] Adapted from "Tolerance in Religion," included in *The Buddhist Outlook: Collected Writings* by Francis Story (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1973]), pp. 227—239.

[588] Specifically, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — the three leading monotheistic religions in the world today.

certainly a superior type of god to the Baal who demanded human sacrifices and obscene rites of worship. Human sacrifice to Jehovah was abolished at a quite early date.

There are few statements so true that they do not need, some time or other, to be contradicted. Nevertheless, it can be stated as a general principle that the gods improved as man improved. And necessarily so, for they were his own creation, and his conception of their natures was drawn from his own. But because of a tribal instinct that seems to be inherent in man, the tribal gods continued to be national gods. Those who did not accept and submit to them were outsiders, fit objects of suspicion. They were a threat to the social integration that rested upon a single authority.

This idea continued to exercise its influence in the Semitic religions even after some of them branched off and claimed to be universal instruments of salvation. Their universality consisted in the goal of bringing together all mankind under the one authoritative power by the promise of salvation — a salvation that was reserved for the followers of the "True God" and none other. Thus, the promise given to the Jews under the covenant of the Old Testament[589] became broadened in Christianity into the promise to all men that they should be partakers of eternal glory, on condition that they believed in and followed Jesus Christ: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me … shall never die." But, at the same time: "There is none cometh unto the Father *except* through me."

So the principle of the exclusiveness of salvation was preserved, but it had come to rest on the basis of conversion instead of on birth in one particular group of the human race. A new moral concept of good and evil was introduced, and it caused a breach that could be closed in one way only: by converting the unbelievers and making them one with the faithful. By this means was ensured the perpetuation of the religious authority on earth and the welfare of the converts in the life to come.

If all who died outside the faith were condemned to eternal damnation, it was clearly the duty of the believers to save them at all costs. There could be no question of tolerating other religions, which, by definition, were evil. Since there was only one way, one "straight and narrow gate," men must be driven through it and along it as sheep are herded to the pasture. There was only one true Shepherd, and this assumption gave him a prerogative that no ordinary shepherd has: he was authorized to coax or force into his own flock as many sheep from outside as he could get.

From such a viewpoint as this, tolerance could never be seen as a virtue, but only as a reprehensible weakness of faith or a disregard for the welfare of others. As a result, there came to be two chief motivations behind the effort to convert: on the part of the

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[589] The Jewish holy book (the "Bible" or "Old Testament") states that God made a sacred covenant with a man named Abraham. According to the Biblical account, Abraham, a native of Ur in Mesopotamia, was called upon by God to leave his own country and journey to another land, where he would become the founder of a new nation. He obeyed the call unquestioningly and (at 75 years of age) proceeded with his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, and other companions to the land of Canaan. God promised Abraham that his "seed" would inherit the land and become a numerous nation. The descendants of Abraham continue to this day — they are the Jews, and they believe that they are God's only chosen people. (This footnote is taken from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.)

more sincere, a genuine desire to save souls; on that of the more worldly-minded, the aim of extending the power and domination of their particular church. Since human motivations are always rather tangled, there may also be a third, intermingled with these: the need to convince oneself by convincing others. In actual missionary practice, it is usually men and women of the sincere type who are used as tools by those whose real aim is domination.

But whatever the motive or mixture of motives, the central fact on which it all rests is the teaching of exclusiveness of salvation. The more firmly this belief is held, the less possibility there is of tolerance. It is only when the religious conviction weakens that the bare possibility of tolerating other faiths can make an entry.

Such a weakening, however, is a weakening of the total structure so far as revealed religion is concerned. The mandate, "Thou shalt worship none other God but me," is imperative. In Hinduism, where, in the words of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, "all paths lead unto me," the monotheistic problem is dealt with somewhat differently. It is assumed that all the many gods are but the manifestations of one eternal, immutable being, who accepts the sacrifice (*yajña*) offered to each. One who denies the existence of such a being is not thought to be excluded from ultimate salvation; the hope for him lies somewhere else along the endless path of transmigration.

The Semitic religions hold no such hope. To die an unbeliever is to die in an irreversible state of sin. It is not the purpose here to point out the injustice and illogicality of this view; it is already apparent to everyone who has thought seriously about it with an unbiased mind. Yet, for the past two thousand years, it has been the prevailing religious idea in the West, and it still shapes the religious thinking of many people. As might be expected, it remains strongest where the control of religious thought is most authoritarian, and where belief has held most closely to the primitive doctrines, unaffected by scientific or historical criticism. It is there that we see, in its utmost purity, the pattern of missionary activity already referred to: the utilization of the sincere believer by those whose real objective is the extension of power.

Judaism has, to a great extent, retained the tribal structure of religion. It does not seek to make converts but is content to preserve itself, a nation of the chosen, within or alongside the nations outside the covenant; and therein lies the strength that has upheld it throughout the centuries, in the face of persecution and oppression. It is the great spreading branches of Judaism,[590] the limbs that have outgrown the trunk, that must be seeking ever fresh converts for themselves. Both of them have, in the course of time, detached themselves almost completely from the parent stem and have substituted new doctrines, such as the worship of a female deity[591] (practically a restoration of the archaic cult of a Mother-Goddess) for the worship of the original Jehovah. But with all of these, the doctrine of salvation that is conditional on the acceptance of one church and one creed is fundamental. It cannot be discarded without wrecking the entire theological edifice. To a religion of this kind, tolerance can come only with disintegration.

[590] Namely, Christianity and Islam.

[591] The reference here is to the so-called "Virgin Mary," the mother of Jesus, who has a huge cult following among Roman Catholics.

What is the hope of reconciliation between such mutually exclusive creeds? Attempts have been made from to time to time to reconcile them through syncretism.[592] But the offspring of such cross-fertilization is a pallid hybrid — so pallid, so wan, so utterly lacking in the vitality that springs from a single belief, that it has little chance of survival. Of all such attempted syncretisms, none of them has been to any degree successful. Some have died out altogether; others have remained alive on the lunatic fringe of society, among people who are incapable of recognizing inconsistencies; others have completely reversed their original aim and become more exclusive, more intolerant, than those they set out to supersede. As a general rule, when a man says that he believes in the truth of all religions, he really means that he can believe in none.

In the case of most theistic religions, therefore, tolerance can only be regarded as an unhealthy symptom, a sign of approaching dissolution.[593] The robust believer does not understand it; to him, the prime duty of life is to draw others into his fold, and, for this purpose, he will use any means whatsoever. If by torture a man may be coerced into accepting the "true faith," and so saved for eternity — let him be tortured. If he is obdurate and likely to be a source of infection to others — and particularly if, like Giordano Bruno, he is intelligent enough to be listened to with respect —, let him be killed. Rather one man should die than a million should be led into damnation by his heresy. Such was the warped thinking that inspired the Inquisition, and that mentality is still with us. Only weakness prevents it from functioning as in former days.

Accepting the initial position, that salvation is granted only on acknowledgement of one particular God and church, the conclusion is logical enough. The warping of the moral sense comes about not through a willful perversion but through an initial error, blindly accepted and conscientiously carried to its extreme.

In Buddhism, the initial error never existed, for several reasons. The first is that Buddhism did not begin as a tribal religion. It was not born of, nor involved in, the politics of survival and expansion. The *Buddha's* world-view took all life as its province and all the situations of living beings as its concern. Its great theme was the universality of suffering (*dukkha*), spread out in space and time illimitably; its goal, to bring that suffering to an end. For a universal disease, there must, the *Buddha* reasoned, be a universal remedy, and He set out to discover it. So Buddhism was a universal religion from its very inception, the moment of the *Buddha's* Enlightenment. It never had to pass

[592] Such as the Ebionites, an early ascetic sect of Jews who also followed Jesus. The Ebionites were one of several such sects that originated in and around Palestine in the first centuries CE and included the Nazarenes and Elkasites. Most of the features of Ebionite doctrine were anticipated in the teachings of the earlier Essene sect, as revealed in the so-called "Dead Sea Scrolls," the first of which were found in 1947 in a series of caves near the ruins of Qumrān on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. The Ebionites believed in one God and taught that Jesus was the Messiah and was the true "prophet" mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:15. They rejected the Virgin Birth of Jesus, instead holding that he was the natural son of Joseph and Mary. The Ebionites believed Jesus became the Messiah because he obeyed the Jewish Law. They themselves faithfully followed the Law, although they removed what they regarded as interpolations in order to uphold their teachings, which included vegetarianism, voluntary poverty, ritual ablutions, and the rejection of animal sacrifices. The Ebionites also held Jerusalem in great veneration.

[593] An exception is the Bahá'í faith.

through the stages of growth from the tribal to the universal, those stages in which so many inconsistencies are bound to appear and so many original doctrines have to be modified or else abandoned. There was never any exclusiveness in it, neither the exclusiveness of race, caste, nor even of human life. Every animal has its place in the grand cosmic order; even an insect can finally attain liberation.

In the second place, man was shown to be the master supreme of his own destiny. On him alone it rested whether he were to enjoy happiness or suffer misery in the life to come. His future did not lie in the arbitrary will of a jealous God, in the intercession of a priest, or in the surrender of his reason to any special set of dogmas; it lay solely with his own actions and understanding. The question of who was to be saved and how — whether by faith or works, and if by faith, what particular kind of faith — never arose in Buddhism. True, there is but one way open to the final cessation of suffering, the way of release from the passions, which only the *Buddhas* teach: but there are many lives during which it may be sought, and no being could be eternally damned. If none was chosen, none was rejected; and the choice was vested in the living, thinking, acting man.

If a man is not yet ready to receive the whole truth, let him go his way. His journey towards it will be as long or as short as he himself makes it. A *Buddha* can only point the way. He cannot traverse it for another, and still less will He compel another to take it before he is ready. For it is a Way that cannot be forced on another; its whole significance is bound up with the act of choice, the independent will to take that Way in preference to all others.

Furthermore, the Buddhist system of mental cultivation insists that one should put one's own house in order before venturing to interfere with another's life. "Can one who is himself in the mire help out another?" the *Buddha* asked and gave the answer: "No, such a thing can in no way be."

So, with no basis for spiritual compulsion and no desire for worldly dominance, Buddhism remains today exactly what it was when the *Buddha* first made His announcement that He had found the path to Liberation. That which is viewed as a defect in other religions — tolerance of the beliefs of others — is, in Buddhism, a virtue that is primary, inherent, and unalterable. But now, we must proceed to a closer examination of what the word "tolerance" really implies.

Buddhist ethico-psychology shows that every wholesome state of mind conceals within itself a near enemy. Thus, in the practice of *mettā-bhāvanā*, universal loving-kindness, the near enemy is sensual love. So every virtue is accompanied by some defect — even vice — that is so similar to it in outward aspect that, with a little help from the rationalizing mechanism of the mind, it may slip by disguised as a virtue itself. It is sometimes not at all an easy matter to distinguish between the true virtue and the enemy that lies hidden within it, or that overshadows it as a potentiality. In order to be sure about this, it is necessary to analyze the virtue, discover what really constitutes it, and the point, if any, where it is likely to slip over and become, if not a vice, a weakness.

What, then, do we really mean by "tolerance?" In the true and exact sense, tolerance means the ability to live with others who hold divergent views and perhaps follow different ways of life that arise from such views, without interfering with them or

attempting to force one's own ideas and ways on them. Just as a living organism tolerates and adapts itself to a certain degree of variation in its environment, or to the intrusion of other organisms, so in society, man has to learn to tolerate others whose opinions and habits are not the same as his own and may even be distasteful to him. It is the practice of non-interference, of live-and-let-live.

So far, so good. We must remark that this definition of tolerance does not assert that we must or should ourselves adopt the beliefs or practices of others, when these are alien to our own and our own are seemingly better. It is only necessary that we should admit to others the right we claim for ourselves.[594] But this is the first point at which, if the definition of tolerance is not clear, the practice of it may slip over into becoming a weakness. In practicing tolerance, people sometimes carry it to the extreme of trying to incorporate into their own beliefs those of others. It is a tendency to which Buddhists are more prone than most people and is often the result of a misguided excess of amicability. But, in other instances, this "near enemy" of tolerance is actually its opposite; it springs from an inability to tolerate anyone else's ideas unless one can, by some mental gymnastics, make them one's own. It is a proof of the inability to agree to disagree. One who is so constituted finds it the only way in which he can resolve the difficulty without conflict.

The problem that arises next is rather more difficult to settle, and perhaps it is one that cannot be satisfactorily settled by a general formula. Its solution must depend upon circumstances, and the probabilities of good or evil to which they give rise. It is this: is moral condemnation incompatible with tolerance?

It is often said (and even more often written) that the *Buddha* never condemned. This idea originated with Western students of Buddhism who were at once struck by the difference between the condemnation of other faiths which was so marked a feature of their own religion, and the complete absence of such condemnation in Buddhism. To them, it was a new, and very surprising idea. They were accustomed to the belief that, if one had the proper faith in one's own religion, one automatically condemned all others, for the reasons we have seen. They were rightly impressed by the liberal outlook of Buddhism and made much of it.

It is certainly true that the *Buddha* never condemned after this fashion. But, unfortunately, by careless handling, the idea came to bear a wider and looser meaning, and one that is quite different from what was originally intended. It was taken to mean that the *Buddha* never, in any circumstances, condemned by criticism anything or anyone.

This is demonstrably false. Among the things the *Buddha* condemned in precise and unmistakable terms were the superstitious and animal sacrifices of the Brahmins and

[594] Every human being should have the right to hold his or her own opinions and ethical and religious beliefs, no matter how different those opinions and beliefs may be from our own. This means that every human being should be treated with respect, openness, and honesty. However, they do not have the right to impose their beliefs on another or on others through any form of coercion, deception, or dishonesty, no matter how subtle.

their pretensions to caste superiority; the erroneous doctrines of the *Titthiyas*, or dissident sects; all forms of cruelty and immoral behavior; and, last but not least, the shortcomings of some of His own *Bhikkhus*. There is no need to cite quotations and references here; anyone can verify the facts by reading the *Suttanta* and *Vinaya* for himself. Perhaps the strongest term of reproof the *Buddha* used was "Foolish man!," but it was enough. In the simile of the horse-tamer, the *Buddha* gives three methods by which horses may be dealt with: some horses the trainer teaches gently; others harshly, while still others he kills. Similarly, the *Buddha* says that some disciples He teaches gently, others harshly, and still others, He kills. And how does the *Tathāgata* kill a disciple? When the *Tathāgata* finds that a disciple is incorrigible and cannot or will not learn, He "kills" him by refusing to give him instructions. In other words, the *Buddha* lets the man go his own way.

In dealing with erroneous and misleading opinions, there is evidence of forceful criticism,[595] as in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, where we find the robust expression *paripūra-bāla-dhamma*, "a full-blown doctrine of fools," applied to the belief in a permanent, unchanging soul (*attā-vāda*). Neither in the Theravādin nor the Mahāyāna texts is any support to be found for the picture of the *Buddha* as a negative and ineffectual personality — a Teacher who never disagreed with anyone and never engaged in controversy —, which has become so popular with certain writers. The *Buddha's* tolerance was that of a strong and vigorous mind which understands the limitations of other minds and, whilst not compromising with untruth, does not attempt to force truth into unwilling ears. It should never be confused with the weakness and humility that Christianity exalts but few Christians try to cultivate.

True Buddhist tolerance, then, should, as far as possible, follow the pattern set by the *Buddha* Himself; that is to say, it should allow others to hold and to follow whatever beliefs they choose, so long as they are incapable of realizing any higher truths. But it does not insist that Buddhists should approve of what others believe or give their assent to it when it goes against the basic teachings of the Master or when it is patently false. Neither does it demand that Buddhists should submit to pressures from the followers of other religions who try to impose their own ideas through force where they can and by persuasion where they cannot.

This brings us to the crux of the problem as it exists for many Buddhists today. An organism will tolerate what is inimical to it only up to a certain point, the maximum threshold of toleration set by its nature. After that point is reached, it reacts, making a determined stand for survival. So it is with any group of human beings who are exposed to dangerous influences from within or without. If those influences are such as to constitute a menace to their survival, or are showing signs of reaching that point, the

[595] Even though every human being should have the right to hold his or her own opinions and ethical and religious beliefs, no matter how different those opinions and beliefs may be from our own, when those opinions enter into the public domain, they must be held to the same norms of honesty, consistency, rationality, evidence, legality, morality, and revisability as any other set of beliefs, dogmas, theories, proposals, opinions, and the like. When they enter into the public domain, they cease to be privately-held opinions and become open to scrutiny, criticism, and refutability. It is not a sign of intolerance to demand proof.

reaction is bound to follow. When, for example, it is a case of truth being swallowed up by authoritarian dogma, or the right of freedom to think and act being lost in subjection to highly organized pressure groups, tolerance of the threat ceases to be a virtue and turns into a source of danger.[596] In this imperfect world, truth and falsehood, together with the infinitely graduated half-truths and half-falsehoods that lie between, will always be found side by side; but if any religion claiming a monopoly of truth seeks to eliminate all others, the ethics of Buddhism do not require that Buddhists should stand aloof and allow the supreme Teaching to be obscured or driven out of human memory. Truth cannot be destroyed, but the understanding of it can; history has seen this happen time and again. The sole measure of progress is the human mind, and to shackle it is to turn back the clock.

In permitting Buddhism to become identified with a conception of tolerance that is quite erroneous, Buddhists have given their opponents a stick for their own back. And the stick is not infrequently used by Buddhists on one another. It has come about that any emphatic declaration of Buddhist doctrine which happens to conflict with that of some other creed raises a howl of accusation — "Intolerance!" Any protest, however mild, against misrepresentations of Buddhism, or any reply by Buddhists to attacks on their religion, provokes the same parrot-cry: "Intolerance!" This word is the standard formula of all those who, sheltering behind what they suppose to be a prohibition in Buddhism, claim the privilege of writing and speaking against the *Dhamma* with impunity. If a Buddhist should answer them in kind, promptly comes the taunt: "he is not a true Buddhist, he is intolerant!"

It is a fact that the *Buddha* said, "If anyone should speak against Me or My Doctrine, you should not become angry. If you become angry, you are no follower of Mine." But it was against the anger that He was giving this warning, for anger is an unwholesome state of mind, no matter what provokes it. The *Buddha* was certainly not speaking against the right His followers shared with all other men to state their creed and reply to criticisms of it. Had His reproof been directed against that, the *Buddha* would have been reproving Himself, for He replied to His critics often enough. In what other way could He have vindicated and spread His Teaching? Certainly not by saying to everyone who raised objections, "Yes, you are right," in the tone of submissiveness that some present-day Buddhists would have us adopt. *The Buddha never apologized for being a Buddha*.

The degree of tolerance that should be shown to those who transgress important moral laws, under the impression that they are doing no wrong, raises a problem of a different kind. The Brahmins of the *Buddha's* day slaughtered cattle wholesale, no doubt in the firm belief that what they were doing was a highly praiseworthy and religious act, pleasing to the gods not less than it was profitable to themselves. So far as abstaining from forcible intervention went, the *Buddha* can be said to have tolerated the practice. He did not whip the Brahmins out of the temples as Jesus whipped the money-changers out of the temple in Jerusalem. But He assuredly did not tolerate the custom in the wider

[596] As pointed out by Karl Popper, tolerance does not mean tolerating the intolerable.

sense, by abstaining from comment and thereby giving it a tacit approval. If the current idea of tolerance demands that care must be taken never to hurt the feelings or susceptibilities of others in any way whatsoever, it does not appear that the *Buddha* interpreted it in that way. The Brahmins must often have smarted under the irony of discourses such as the Kūṭadanta Sutta and the sharp rebuke given to a Brahmin youth, inflated with the pride of birth, in the Ambattha Sutta. There was no righteous indignation in the *Buddha's* reproofs; they were delivered dispassionately and objectively. For this reason, they must have been all the more effective.

Not to condemn what is morally reprehensible could prove a very dangerous and costly thing, both for the individual and for society as a whole. A society that is too lenient, that withholds moral condemnation to an extreme degree, stands in danger of allowing evils to proliferate in its midst. To prevent this, two things are necessary: a sense of balance and proportion — a due regard for the middle way — and the ability to distinguish between what is morally bad because it is an infringement of a universal law, and what is considered bad merely on grounds of tradition or local custom.

In any case, between the legitimate criticism of things that are harmful and the intolerance of a religion that will not permit others to hold a different belief, there is a wide and deep gulf. The two belong to distinct and separate orders of thought and behavior. It is through not recognizing this fact that so much confused thinking has arisen. The misconception has been detrimental to the Buddhist outlook in the past, and its influence is still active today.

One of the crucial tests of the civilized man is the ability to live in harmony with those whose religious beliefs, customs, and total world-view are different from his own; in a word, the ability to agree to disagree. It is this that constitutes the real tolerance of Buddhism. But what happens when the Buddhist has to live with those whose own intolerance makes tolerance in others a dangerous weakness? That is the concrete problem that faces many Buddhists today. Even in Buddhist countries, there are unseen pressures at work on the task of turning men away from the *Dhamma*. The only answer to this menace seems to lie in an ideological resistance that is sufficiently strong to prevent the situation from degenerating into one that can be met only by force. To link Buddhism with nationalism is presumably the first and spontaneous reaction, and it has already taken place in certain Buddhist countries. But, at its best, it is an unhappy solution; it presents us with the discouraging phenomenon of a natural process in reverse. The universal religion becomes, after long centuries, a tribal one. At its worst, it could be disastrous to the further spread of Buddhism. There is no greater obstacle to the spread of a religion abroad than its identification with a particular nation or political grouping of mankind. When it is so identified, it naturally takes responsibility in some measure for all the defects of that particular group. People who would gladly embrace Buddhism as a doctrine of universal character, free from all nationalistic associations, hesitate to do so when it becomes specifically the religion of this country or that. This may be so strong that it becomes equivalent to a feeling of having changed one's nationality. They feel that, in some obscure way, they are taking on the identity of the group they associate with that religion.

A connection has been introduced that militates against the realization that Buddhism is a way of life and a world-view that transcends nationality, race, and language. A reaction of this kind is seen among African-Americans, some of whom, disgusted with Christianity because it is "the white man's religion," have turned to Islam. No intelligent Westerner would be prejudiced against Buddhism because it is an Asian religion; but he might considerably hesitate to adopt the "State Religion" of some country that had failed to demonstrate the superiority of its creed in practice.

It seems, therefore, that Buddhists, as a whole, should work on a new and distinct pattern of tolerance — or rather, of dealing tolerantly with those who are not tolerant. Better perhaps than a narrow nationalism would be an international framework of solidarity between Buddhists of different countries. Within such a framework could be built up a strong ideological unity to resist pressures from the outside. But, before this can be accomplished, there must be clarification of ideas as to what constitutes tolerance in the true sense, what are its requirements and what its limitations. This excursus has been an attempt to provide an introduction into that much misunderstood subject. All it invites the readers to do is to review their own ideas of what is meant by Buddhist tolerance, and, if they are Buddhists, to be on their guard against allowing others to use the current misinterpretation of the word as a lever against them and the Buddhist Teachings and way of life.

Buddhist Cosmology[597]

At the outset, it must be realized that the *Buddha* did not profess to give any specific instructions regarding the formation of the universe. He laid down, as an essential part of His system of philosophy, only such principles as were general and universal: because it is these alone that have a bearing on man's own nature and must be understood in order to bring the mind out of delusion into the state of Enlightenment.

At the time of the *Buddha*, certain ideas belonging to the schools of Vedic Brahmanism were current regarding the physical world, and, since the *Buddha* Himself did not categorically deny them, they passed into Buddhist thought with only such modification as was imposed by the central tenets of the philosophy. The view held by the compilers of the *Upanishads* was that the universe, which is essentially illusory (*māyā*), is a projection of the eternal, self-existing Brahman: that is to say, of the *nirguṇa Brahman*, the neuter, or attributeless Brahman, as distinct from the personalized or *saguṇa Brahmā*. It was supposed to come about by the interpenetration of *prakṛti* (matter) and *puruṣa* (spirit). It was the play (*līlā*) of the divine principle that comprehended all things and penetrated them, in a single unity. It is this view that is held today by the Hindu school of *Advaita*, or absolute monism. There is also a school of

[597] Adapted from "Cosmological Thought in Buddhism and Modern Science," included in *Dimensions of Buddhist Thought: Collected Essays* by Francis Story (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1985]), pp. 285—302.

qualified monism, but, since it shares the central concept of divine creation, or projection, what may be said of it in relation to Buddhism is the same as may be said of *Advaita*.

It was this theory of a primal moving spirit that Buddhism discarded, substituting for Brahman the universal law of interdependence and causality. If there were a creator, Buddhism argues, he would himself be subject to some law whereby he could perform the act of creation. His being itself requires laws, for to exist is to function, and there must be principles anterior to and above the functioning to make the functioning possible. To put it another way, every action presupposes alternatives, and these alternatives must exist as potentials before the action can be possible. When we say that an action is *possible*, we postulate a law or principle of possibility, and that principle must exist prior to the action. Therefore, there cannot be a First Cause in the absolute sense. There must be a prior condition to the existence of anything, including God. This principle was actually acknowledged in the earliest Upanishadic thought under the name of *ṛta* — the law to which even God is subject. But the Upanishadic schools never pursued this concept to its logical conclusion. Buddhism does so, and the result is a rejection of the First Cause entirely. The intermediate agent, God as Creator, being found unnecessary, Buddhist thought concerns itself solely with the laws of being, and there is no attempt to present them in anthropomorphic guise.

But Buddhism agrees with Vedantic ideas in accepting the concept of cyclic evolution and dissolution of universes. In Hinduism, a world period represents a day of Brahmā; it is a period during which a complete cycle of evolution and decline, leading up to the dissolution of the universe, takes place. This is followed by the period of quiescence, or night of Brahmā, between the collapse of one universe and the arising of the next. Leaving out the poetical symbolism of the days and nights of Brahmā, the Buddhist cyclic system follows the same pattern.

The measurement of cosmic time is called the "Great *Kalpa*,"[598] which may be termed an "eon." Its duration is said to be incalculable: "Imagine a mountain consisting of a solid cube of rock, one league in length, in breadth, and in height. If one were to rub it with a piece of cloth once at the end of every hundred years, the time that it would take to wear away such a mountain would not be so long as the duration of a Great *Kalpa*." The Great *Kalpa*, according to Ledi Sayādaw, is not a period so much as a notion of time itself. It corresponds to the idea of an eternity.

The Great *Kalpa* is itself divided into four subsidiary *kalpas*, each representing a cyclic period of a particular world-system. These periods, which may be denoted as eons, too, are not calculable, and may vary in length. And, while there are four such eons to an eternity, each of them, in turn, is subdivided into shorter *kalpas*, or ages, of more or less measurable duration. The third type of *kalpa* is that which corresponds to the life-span of any particular being.[599] The fourth and last *kalpa* is the period that intervenes

[598] Pāḷi *kappa*.

[599] In the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (*Dīgha Nikāya*, no. 16), where it is stated that the *Buddha* could, had He wished, have lived on to the end of the *kalpa*, the period there signified is said by some to be the normal duration of a human life, which is taken as being one hundred years. Others consider that it means until the end of a world-period, at which point all material things pass away.

between the destruction of one universe and the formation of another.[600] During this vast period of time — or timelessness, for the time exists only in relation to events — the substance of the entire cosmos is reduced to its primal elements and distributed throughout space in an undifferentiated mass. In terms of modern physics, we would say that the subatomic forces are disintegrated and dispersed. This may happen as follows: the universe would expand until it reaches the point at which the force of repulsion overcomes that of attraction, and the particles of matter are scattered widely throughout space. All that would be left of the cosmos would be the released electromagnetic energy, with which the whole of space would be filled.[601]

In this condition, the quiescence would not be altogether complete; so long as a residuum of energy remained, there would be the potentiality of renewed differentiation of matter and a reconstruction of the universe. Like the pendulum that swings to its greatest extremity and, after a moment of equipoise, swings back, or like a vast pulse beating to an unvarying rhythm, the cosmos repeats past history. As before, the process may commence with a tremendous cosmic explosion. Then, over immeasurable ages, the new universe begins to take shape. Matter forms itself into stellar clusters and nebulae, and, in the course of time, space again assumes the general aspect with which we are familiar. And life again begins to evolve.

THE CAKKAVĀLA: The universe is said to comprise a number of world-systems, or *cakkavālas*, and the number of these world-systems contained in the whole cosmos is incalculable. The term "galaxy" denotes a particular grouping of world-systems. Each galaxy has its own gravitational field and revolves around a center. Such are the spiral and cloud nebulae galaxies, for example. The *cakkavālas* are local world-systems embedded in these, of which our own solar system is one. Our solar system is situated in one of the arms of a vast galaxy of the flattened disk type, called the Milky Way, which resembles the great spiral nebulae in Andromeda. The Milky Way is estimated to contain around 150 billion stars, and the distance between them increases the further they are removed from the center of concentration around which they all revolve. Our solar system, which is 30,000 light years away from the galactic center, makes one full revolution around it in approximately 250 million years. To present-day astronomers, this is known as one cosmic year.

A lot of this is scientific conjecture at present, but it is based on reliable data and must be accepted until or unless future discoveries show it to be inaccurate. It is cited here for the bearing it has upon the older cosmological concepts of Buddhism. Agreement between them is found in the hypothesis of a cyclic breaking-up and restoration of the cosmos and in the rejection of a First Cause or creative agency. In both

[600] *Niyāma-Dīpanī*, by Ledi Sayādaw Mahāthera, translated by Beni Barua, D. Litt, M.A., and revised and edited by C. A. F. Rhys Davids, D. Litt, M.A., with the residuum translated by U Nyana, Patamagyaw (Rangoon, Burma [Myanmar] [1921]), pp. 18ff. A reprint of this book (2000) is available from the U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, United Kingdom.

[601] In the original, Story also discusses alternative scientific theories (such as "Steady State"). Since these theories have now been abandoned by the scientific community, they are not included here.

concepts, the act of creation is perpetual and is the outcome of natural processes — it results from the nature of energy and the laws that govern it.

The second important point of contact is the agreement concerning a multiplicity of world-systems, the *cakkavālas* of Buddhism and the solar systems of present-day astronomy. "In our metagalactic system, there are hundreds of millions of galaxies, and each galaxy may be composed of thousands of millions of stars. Even in our galaxy, which numbers approximately 150 billion stars, there may be hundreds of thousands of planets on which life is likely to originate and develop. Our infinite universe must also contain an infinite number of inhabited planets."[602]

In the canonical texts of both Theravādin and Mahāyāna Buddhism, there are numerous references to the multiplicity of worlds that bear sentient life. But it is only in the texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism, not in the words ascribed to the *Buddha* Himself, that any detailed cosmology is given.[603] And there, as we should expect, the picture presented has some features in common with other ancient cosmologies: the earth is by implication flat, with a great mountain, Mt. Meru,[604] at its center. There are seven great oceans encompassed by seven rings of mountains, and four great continents are situated respectively at the four cardinal points of the compass. The southern continent is Jambudīpa,[605] the land of the Rose Apple, or India. Between the four great land masses, there are smaller islands. The sun, moon, and planets are supposed to revolve around Mt. Meru, night occurring on Jambudīpa when the mountain obscured the sun, and it was day on the Northern continent, Uttarakuru.

There are two points to be noticed in connection with this peculiar view of the cosmos. The first is that, if it were indeed the picture currently accepted at the time of the *Buddha* — and some very ancient texts from the *Tipiṭaka* tend to show that it was —, it would not have been to the purpose of the *Buddha*, who was a teacher of spiritual truths, to correct it. Had He attempted to do so, His time and efforts would have been wasted. Few would have understood, and the understanding would not have benefited them spiritually. The majority would have dismissed it as a theory of a lunatic. Furthermore, Pāḷi is an undeveloped language, in which a vocabulary of relatively few words had to be made to express all ideas. Lacking the necessary terminology, which modern languages have developed and expanded as the growth of knowledge required, the *Buddha* would have been handicapped by these limitations of language, even had He wished to describe the motions of the planets and the physical construction of the solar system. In Pāḷi, a word whose principle meaning was originally very simple is made to serve for highly complicated ideas, owing to the absence of any borrowings from other sources or the

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[602] A. Oparin and V. Fesenkov, *The Universe* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House [1957]), p. 232. For current views on the nature of the universe, cf. John D. Barrow, *The Origin of the Universe* (New York, NY: BasicBooks [1994]) and Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Co. [2003]) and *The Fabric of the Cosmos* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf [2005]).

[603] Though particulars start to appear in the Commentaries to the Theravādin texts, it is only in the texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism that a full cosmology is laid out.

[604] Also called Mt. Sumeru = "the World Mountain."

[605] Sanskrit *Jambudvīpa*.

development of new verbal forms. Thus, the word *khandha*, which philosophically stands for an aggregate of physical and psychological factors, originally meant merely a "lump" of something. It is even used physiologically to denote "shoulder." With such a restricted vocabulary, ideas tend to remain rudimentary or to be misunderstood. We therefore have no means of knowing whether the terms employed to describe a world-system are to be taken literally or as makeshift approximations, analogies, or poetic fictions.

However that may be, it is a striking fact that the true picture of the solar system as we now have it, is actually in closer conformity with the *Buddha's* teaching of universal principles than is the traditional one held by the Buddhist commentators or developed in Mahāyāna writings. It carries out the principle of uninterrupted revolution denoted by the wheel (*cakka*[606]) and that of having no beginning point, of which the physical symbol is the sphere. If, in fact, we would seek for a material illustration of the law of recurrence, of cyclic progression under the control of incessant change, we should find its perfect expression in the revolving galaxies, the solar systems, and the structure of the atom.

In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* (II, 178), the *Buddha* speaks of the succession of *kalpas* in the following words:

> *"Undetermined, Bhikkhus, is the beginning of this world. The absolute beginning point of beings running on in birth after birth bound by ignorance and the bonds of craving is not discernible."*

The Pāḷi word translated here as "undetermined" is *anamata*, meaning that which is unknown and unascertained. The sense, therefore, is that the absolute beginning point of the cycles is not to be known by calculation. There is no limit by which it can be defined. "The absolute beginning point … is not discernible" is equivalent to saying that it does not exist. The proposition contained in the words "The absolute beginning point … is not discernible" can therefore only mean that, although each individual *kalpa* has its beginning, middle, and end, there is no beginning to the succession of Great *Kalpas* in general.[607] The cyclic successions have existed always, the reason being that they do not exist *in time*, but time, as a progression of events, exists in them. The time of Bergson, which is absolute duration, is not susceptible of measurement other than that which is brought about by cutting into the flow of specific events. It is these more or less arbitrary divisions that we commonly mean when we speak of time. A beginning of time in the state of timelessness is clearly an impossibility; it is only *periods* of time that can have a beginning and an end.[608] We shall have occasion to deal further with the philosophical

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[606] Sanskrit *cakra*.

[607] Ledi Sayādaw, *Niyāma-Dīpanī*, translated by Beni Barua, D. Litt, M.A., and revised and edited by C. A. F. Rhys Davids, D. Litt, M.A., with the residuum translated by U Nyana, Patamagyaw (Rangoon, Burma [Myanmar] [1921]), p. 18.

[608] Henri Bergson, *Philosophy of Change*, pp. 15ff.

difference between time as a symbol of space and time that is absolute duration when we discuss the nature of the flux of becoming, later on.

STAGES OF GREAT CYCLES:

> *"There are four incalculable epochs, Bhikkhus. The four are: the Enveloping Epoch; the Enveloped Epoch; the Developing Epoch; and the Developed Epoch. The epoch, Bhikkhus, during which there is cosmic envelopment is not easy to reckon as so many years, or centuries, or tens or hundreds of centuries."*

The Enveloping Epoch is the period during which the world-system is in decline; the Enveloped Epoch is that in which it is in the state of dissolution. The Developing Epoch is the period of growth, when life evolves from lower to higher stages; the Developed Epoch is that in which evolution has reached its highest peak. "Having once been reinstated, while the world-system continues to be in that state, it is said to be Developed."[609] Each of these periods is a fourth part of a Great *Kalpa*, so it will be seen that every Great *Kalpa* involves the full development of sentient life followed by its total disappearance from a world-system.

Now, there is a clear connection in Buddhist thought between the total *kamma* of beings taking birth in a given world-system and the fate of that system considered as a physical entity. While universes, like all other phenomena, are subject to dissolution and must, after the lapse of eons, pass away, the manner of their dissolution is in a certain sense determined by the accumulated *kamma* of the beings inhabiting them. On the other hand, the re-formation of the universe after a period of quiescence is brought about by unexpended residual *kamma* of the sentient beings who formerly lived in it.

Every world-system, in its complete state, comprises thirty planes of existence in addition to that occupied by human life. These planes are spoken of in the popular cosmology of Buddhism as being ranged one above the other, but, as we have seen, they have no definite spatial location in reality but interpenetrate one another on different vibrational frequencies. Nonetheless, it is necessary to map them in ascending order, to make their relationship to one another explicit, just as they are found in the Buddhist treatises on the subject. When this is done, the result is a chart of *saṁsāra*, showing all the states comprised in what is known as the Three Worlds (*ti-loka*), namely, the Realm of Sense-Desire (*kāma-loka*), the Fine-Material Realm (*rūpa-loka*), and the Non-Material Realm (or the Realm of Formlessness; *arūpa-loka*) (see the chart on the next page).

Of these thirty-one abodes, those that constitute the sphere of sense-desire (*kāma-loka*) are numbers 1—11 in the chart, including the inferior states, the human world, and the lower heavenly planes. Above these, numbers 12—27 are the fine-material worlds, but still having form (*rūpa*) and differentiation. In all of these realms, the beings are

[609] Ledi Sayādaw, *Niyāma-Dīpanī*, translated by Beni Barua, D. Litt, M.A., and revised and edited by C. A. F. Rhys Davids, D. Litt, M.A., with the residuum translated by U Nyana, Patamagyaw (Rangoon, Burma [Myanmar] [1921]), p. 20.

equipped with both mind and body, with the sole exception of number 22, where the Brahmās have form only. The reason for this peculiar sphere will be given later. Numbers 28—31 constitute the non-material, or formless, realms inhabited by a highly-developed class of beings that exist solely on the psychological level as zones of mental energy.

The Thirty-one Abodes

31	Neva-saññā-nāsaññāyatanūpaga Devā	Sphere of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception
30	Ākiñcaññāyatanūpaga Devā	Sphere of the Knowledge of Nothingness
29	Viññāṇañcāyatanūpaga Devā	Sphere of the Infinity of Consciousness
28	Ākāsāñcāyatanūpaga Devā	Sphere of the Infinity of Space
27	Akaniṭṭhā Brahmā	Realm of Supreme Brahmās
26	Sudassi Brahmā	Realm of Clear-Sighted Brahmās
25	Sudassa Brahmā	Realm of Beautiful Brahmās
24	Atappa Brahmā	Realm of Serene Brahmās
23	Avihā Brahmā	Realm of Immobile Brahmās
22	Asaññā-satta Brahmā	Realm of Sensationless Brahmās
21	Vehaphala Brahmā	Realm of Greatly-Rewarded Brahmās
20	Subha Kiṇha Brahmā	Realm of Brahmās of Steady Aura
19	Appamāṇa Subha Brahmā	Realm of Brahmās of Infinite Aura
18	Paritta Subha Brahmā	Realm of Brahmās of Minor Aura
17	Ābhassara Brahmā	Realm of Radiant Brahmās
16	Appamānābha Brahmā	Realm of Brahmās of Infinite Luster
15	Parittābha Brahmā	Realm of Brahmās of Minor Luster
14	Mahā Brahmā	Realm of Great Brahmās
13	Brahma-Purohita Brahmā	Ministers of Brahmā
12	Brahma-Parisajja Brahmā	Retinue of Brahmā
11	Paranimmita-vasavatti Devā	Devas enjoying (or utilizing) the creation of others
10	Nimmāna-rati Devā	Devas enjoying their own creations
9	Tusita Devā	Devas enjoying pleasure
8	Yāma Devā	Yāma Devas
7	Tāvatiṁsa Devā	Realm of the Thirty-three Devas
6	Catumahārājika Devā	Realm of the Four Great Kings (of the Four Quarters)
5	Manussa Loka	The Human Realm
4	Asura Loka	Realm of Demons
3	Peta Loka	Realm of Unhappy Spirits (Petas)
2	Tiracchāna Yoni	The Animal Realm
1	Niraya	Realm of Inferno (Hells)

The Fine-Material Realm includes a group of five worlds (the Pure Abodes, or *Suddhāvāsa*, numbers 23—27) that are accessible after death only to those who, before

their death, have attained the third of the four stages of Sainthood, that is, that of an *Anāgāmī*, or Non-Returner. On the expiration of the life-span in that sphere, the *Anāgāmī* passes straight into *parinibbāna*, having attained to the state of Arahantship in the Pure Abodes, which belong to the Brahma-worlds. They are worlds of form because it is not possible to attain Enlightenment without the realization of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*) in the physical as well as the mental constituents of personality.

The spheres above them (numbers 28 to 31) are the four Non-Material, or Formless, worlds, which correspond to the four formless *jhānas*. They are the planes in which are reborn those who have obtained the mental absorptions of the Infinity of Space, Infinity of Consciousness, of Nothingness, and of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception, but who have not transcended them by ultimate realization and the complete destruction of the elements of attachment. These Brahmās are reborn in one of the lower planes at the end of their life-span.

It is these states that were conceived as being the ultimate goal by the Vedic teachers prior to the *Buddha* and are still so in modern Hinduism. They represent the "Union with Brahmā" that was attained by Siddhattha Gotama's first teachers, Aḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Ramaputta.

The sphere of the sensationless beings (*asaññā-satta Brahmaloka*), whose nature consists only of material form without any accompanying mental aggregates (*nāma-kkhandha*), is where ascetics are reborn who, on earth, have attained, in their meditation, the temporary subsidence of mental activity, under the mistaken belief that suffering is solely a characteristic of the mental life. After exhaustion of the *kamma* causing that form of existence, they are reborn again in a lower sphere where both material form and mind exist.

Between some of these worlds of being and others, there is no great physical separation, and, in some instances, they occupy the same dimensional space, as in the case of the human and animal worlds. Others interpenetrate one another so closely, although their vibrational frequencies are different, that, by an adjustment of their mental frequencies, beings belonging to one plane are able to manifest on others. It is for this reason that the phenomena of spiritualism are so often confusing and baffling. The entities that are contacted during spiritualist séances often belong to worlds lower than the human, more particularly the world of *petas*, or unhappy spirits, who, by excessive attachment, are "earthbound" until such time as their unwholesome *kamma* is expended.

When it happens that psychic manifestations from the higher planes appear, it can only be from those worlds that are but very slightly above the human, that is to say, the lower planes of the *Deva-loka*. It is from these comparatively happy realms of existence that spiritualists derive the comfort that the psychic evidence for survival affords them; but the entities reborn on this level have no greater knowledge concerning the ultimate truths of existence than we have ourselves. Often, indeed, their knowledge is less. The only fact of which they are certain is that they are living in pleasant surroundings and that their happiness is increased by their ability to communicate with the human world. For the most part, they seem to be unaware that they must eventually pass away from their

present condition to be reborn elsewhere. In psychic communications, there is, however, the recurring theme of transitoriness: the entities are said to pass on to higher realms after a period of supposed preparation. In reality, they are frequently reborn as human beings or in some still lower world. From other communications received by psychic mediums, it is evident that the state between one human birth and another is not always the "Summerland" that spiritualism, for the consolation of the bereaved, emphasizes so strongly.

Communication with the higher realms of being in the fine-material plane is possible only to those who have strenuously cultivated the requisite meditation practices. In the case of the formless worlds, an especially high attainment is necessary. Only those who have cultivated the four *jhānas* associated with the spheres of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception (an indescribably subtle and refined state of consciousness) can make contact with beings of those realms. In Hinduism, this is known as "Union with Brahmā" and is believed to be the ultimate attainment. The *Buddha*, who was a "Knower of Brahmā" in the sense that He had Himself made contact with the Brahma-world, attributes the belief in a Creator God on the part of other sages, who had not gone beyond the realm of form, to this faculty. The reference to this is to be found in the Brahmajāla and Aggañña Suttas of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.[610]

It is written that, at the destruction of a world-system, either by fire, water, or wind, the realms of existence are demolished from the lowest plane up to the highest Brahma-world.

At the end of the cycle, the beings from the lower worlds, by attaining the jhānic states, become reborn in the Realm of Radiance. From here, after the lapse of the Enveloped Period, they again descend to be reborn in the human world, which has by then been reconstructed by natural processes and has become sufficiently evolved to manifest the higher forms of life once more.

SUMMARY:[611] The universe has no beginning. It is the product of *kamma*, the law of the cause and effect of actions, according to which virtuous actions bring pleasure in the future and non-virtuous actions bring pain. It is a natural law, accounting for all the happiness and suffering in the world. The beings of the universe have been reborn without beginning in various realms as deities, demigods, humans, animals, unhappy spirits[612] (*petas*), and hell beings. Their actions create not only their individual experiences of pleasure and pain but also the domains in which they dwell. The physical universe is thus the product of the individual and collective actions of the inhabitants of the universe. Much of Buddhist practice is directed at performing deeds that will bring

[610] In these two Discourses, the Buddha describes how, in the trance state, He encountered a Brahmā of Radiant Form who himself believed that he was the creator of the universe. Sages of the past taught this theory as revealed religion.

[611] This summary is adapted from Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Story of Buddhism* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco [2001]), p. 19.

[612] Also called "hungry ghosts."

happiness in the future, avoiding deeds that will bring pain, and counteracting the future effects of unwholesome deeds done in the past. And there are some who seek the ultimate goal of liberation from the bonds of *kamma* and the universe it has forged.

The workings of *kamma* are understood over the course of lifetimes without beginning, and, thus, Buddhists speak not only of days and months and years, but also of eons (*kalpas*). The cosmological systems of Indian Buddhism describe a universe that passes through four periods: the Developing Epoch (creation and growth); the Developed Epoch (abiding); the Enveloping Epoch (decline); and the Enveloped Epoch (dissolution / nothingness). The physical universe is created during the first period. Beings come to inhabit the universe during the period of abiding. During the period of decline, the physical universe starts to decay. This is followed by a period of dissolution into nothingness, after which the fourfold cycle begins again.[613] ■

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[613] A cyclic model of the universe, similar to Buddhist views, has been proposed by Paul J. Steinhardt and Neil Turok in their book *Endless Universe: Beyond the Big Bang* (New York, NY: Doubleday [2007]). Steinhardt and Turok "contend that what we think of as the moment of creation was simply part of an infinite cycle of titanic collisions between our universe and a parallel world" (*Discover*). They recount the remarkable developments in astronomy, particle physics, and superstring theory that form the basis for the "Cyclic Universe" theory. According to this theory, the Big Bang was not the beginning of time but the bridge to a past filled with endlessly repeating cycles of evolution, each accompanied by the creation of new matter and the formation of new galaxies, stars, and planets.

29

Reasons to Believe in Rebirth

"I recalled my varied lot in former existences."[614]

References to Rebirth in the Scriptures

How are we to believe in rebirth?

The *Buddha* is our greatest authority on rebirth. On the very night of His Enlightenment, during the first watch of the night, the *Buddha* developed retrocognitive knowledge that enabled Him to read His past lives. He declared:

> *"I recalled my varied lot in former existences as follows: first one life, then two lives, then three, four, five, ten, twenty, up to fifty lives, then a hundred, a thousand, a hundred thousand, and so forth."*[615]

During the second watch of the night, the *Buddha*, with clairvoyant vision, perceived beings disappearing from one state of existence and reappearing in another. He beheld the "base and the noble, the beautiful and the ugly, the happy and the miserable, passing according to their deeds."

These are the very first utterances of the *Buddha* regarding the question of rebirth. The textual references conclusively prove that the *Buddha* did not borrow this stern truth of rebirth from any pre-existing source but spoke from personal knowledge — a knowledge that was supernormal, developed by Himself, and which could be developed by others as well.

In His first paean of joy (*udāna*), the *Buddha* says:

> *"I have gone through many rounds of birth and death (saṁsāra), seeking, but not finding, the builder of this house.*[616] *Sorrowful, indeed, is birth and death again and again!"*[617]

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[614] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Mahāyamakavagga, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, no. 36.
[615] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Mahāyamakavagga, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, no. 36.
[616] The "house" is the body, the "house-builder" is craving (*taṇhā*). "Seeking, but not finding," means failing to attain Enlightenment.
[617] *Dhammapada*, XI, Old Age, verse 153.

In the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta,[618] His very first discourse, the *Buddha*, commenting on the second Noble Truth states: "This very craving is that which leads to rebirth." The *Buddha* concludes this discourse with the words: "This is my last birth. Now, there is no more rebirth."

The *Majjhima Nikāya* (Ariyapariyesanā Sutta, no. 26) relates that, when the *Buddha*, out of compassion for beings, surveyed the world with His *Buddha*-vision before He decided to teach the *Dhamma*, He perceived beings who, with fear, view evil and a world beyond (*paralokavajja-bhayadassāvino*).

In several discourses, the *Buddha* clearly states that beings, having done evil, are, after death (*parammaraṇā*), born in woeful states, and beings, having done good, are born in blissful states:

> *"Those who have done evil suffer here and now, even after death they suffer — the evildoers suffer in both places. Realizing the results of the wrong they have done, the evildoers suffer; and still more suffering awaits them in the next life.*
>
> *"Those who have done good are happy here and now, even after death they are happy — those who have done good are happy in both places. Realizing the results of the good they have done, they are happy; and still more happiness awaits them in the next life."*[619]

Besides the very interesting *Jātaka* stories, which deal with His previous lives and which are of ethical importance, the *Majjhima Nikāya* and the *Anguttara Nikāya* make identical reference to some of the past lives of the *Buddha*.

In the Ghaṭīkāra Sutta,[620] the *Buddha* relates to Venerable Ānanda that He was born as Jotipāla in the time of the Buddha Kassapa, His immediate predecessor. The Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta[621] describes a nocturnal visit of Anāthapiṇḍika to the *Buddha* immediately after his rebirth as a *deva*. In the *Anguttara Nikāya*,[622] the *Buddha* alludes to a past birth as Pacetana the wheelwright. In the *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, the *Buddha* cites the names of some of the *Buddhas* who preceded Him.

An unusual direct reference to departed ones appears in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.[623] Venerable Ānanda desired to know from the *Buddha* the future state of several persons who had died in a particular village. The *Buddha* patiently described their destinies.

Such instances could easily be multiplied from the *Tipiṭaka* to show that the *Buddha* did, indeed, expound the doctrine of rebirth as a verifiable truth.[624]

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[618] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Sacca.
[619] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verses 17—18.
[620] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Rājavagga, Ghaṭīkāra Sutta, no. 81.
[621] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Saḷāyatanavagga, Anāthapiṇḍikovāda Sutta, no. 143.
[622] *Anguttara Nikāya*, Part I, 111.
[623] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, no. 16.
[624] Cf. J. G. Jennings, *The Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha* (London: Oxford University Press [1947]).

Following the *Buddha's* instructions, His disciples also developed retrocognitive knowledge and were able to read a limited, though vast, number of their past lives. The *Buddha's* power in this direction was limitless.

Other Evidence for Rebirth

Certain Indian Rishis, too, prior to the advent of the *Buddha*, were distinguished for such supernormal powers as clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy, telesthesia, and so forth.

Although science takes no cognizance of these supernormal faculties, however, according to Buddhism, men with highly developed mental concentration can cultivate these psychic powers and read their past lives just as one would recall a past incident of one's present life. With their aid, independent of the five senses, direct communication of thought and direct perception of other worlds are made possible.

Some extraordinary persons, especially in their childhood, spontaneously develop, according to the laws of association, the memory of their past births and remember fragments of their previous lives. Pythagoras is said to have distinctly remembered a shield in a Greek temple as having been carried by him in a previous incarnation at the siege of Troy. Somehow or other, these wonderful children lose that memory later, as is the case with many child prodigies.

Experiences of some dependable modern psychiatrists, ghostly phenomena, spirit communication, strange alternate and multiple personalities,[625] also shed some light upon the question of rebirth.

In hypnotic states, some can relate experiences of their past lives, while a few others, such as Edgar Cayce, were able not only to read the past lives of others but also to heal diseases.[626]

The phenomena of multiple personalities has to be explained either as remnants of personal experiences from past lives or as "possession by an invisible spirit." The former explanation is far more reasonable than the latter.

How often do we meet persons whom we have never before met, but whom we instinctively feel are familiar to us? How often do we visit places and instinctively feel that we are acquainted with those surroundings?

The *Dhammapada* Commentary relates the story of a husband and wife who, seeing the *Buddha*, fell at His feet and saluted Him, saying: "Dear son, is it not the duty of sons to care for their mother and father when they have grown old? Why is it that, for

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[625] The *Theragāthā* gives an interesting account of a Brahmin named Vangīsa, "who won favor as a teacher by tapping on skulls with his finger nails and discovering thereby where their former occupants were reborn."

Certain persons at times exhibit different personalities in the course of their particular lives. Prof. William James cites some remarkable cases in his *Principles of Psychology*. The *Visuddhimagga* mentions an interesting incident of a *deva* entering into the body of a lay person.

[626] Cf. *Many Mansions* and *The World Within* by Gina Cerminara.

so long a time, you have not shown yourself to us? This is the first time we have seen you."

The *Buddha* attributed this sudden outburst of parental love to the fact that they had been His parents several times during His past lives and remarked:

> *"Through previous association or present advantage, that old love springs up again like the lotus in the water."*

There arise in this world highly developed personalities and Perfect Ones like the *Buddhas*. Could they evolve suddenly? Could they be the products of a single existence?

How are we to account for personalities like Confucius, Pāṇini, Buddhaghosa, Krishnamurti, Homer, and Plato, or men of genius like Kālidāsa, Shakespeare, and Einstein, or child prodigies like Ramanujan, Pascal, Mozart, Beethoven, and so forth?

Could they be so gifted if they had not led noble lives and acquired similar experience in the past? Is it by mere chance that they are born of those particular parents and placed under those favorable circumstances?

Child prodigies, too, seem to be a problem for scientists. Some medical men are of the opinion that prodigies are the outcome of abnormal glandular development, especially of the pituitary, the pineal, and the adrenal glands. The extraordinary hypertrophy of glands of particular individuals may also be due to a past karmic cause. But how, by mere hypertrophy of glands, could one Christian Heineken talk within a few hours of birth, repeat passages from the Bible at the age of one year, answer any question on Geography at the age of two, speak French and Latin at the age of three, and be a student of philosophy at the age of four; how could John Stuart Mill read Greek at the age of three; how could Babington Macaulay write a history of the world at the age of six; how could William James Sidis read and write at the age of two, speak French, Russian, English, German, and some Latin and Greek at the age of eight; how could Charles Bennet of Manchester speak several languages at the age of three? Such prodigies cannot be explained by modern science.

Heredity alone cannot account for prodigies, otherwise, their ancestors would have displayed similar talents, and similar talents would also appear in their children and grandchildren, which, more often than not, is not the case.

The theory of heredity should be supplemented by the doctrine of *kamma* and rebirth for an adequate explanation of these puzzling problems.

Is it reasonable to believe that the present span of life is the only existence between two eternities, one of happiness and one of misery (that is, the heaven and hell of Christian doctrine)? The few years that we spend here, at the most five score years, must certainly be an inadequate preparation for eternity.

If one believes in the present and the future, it is logical to believe in a past as well.

If there be reason to believe that we have existed in the past, then, surely, there are no reasons to disbelieve that we shall continue to exist after our present life has apparently ceased.

Thus, the Christian doctrine that we are born once at a particular point in time, spend a lifetime on earth, and then spend the rest of eternity in either heaven or hell is both illogical and highly unlikely.

We are born into the state created by ourselves. If, in spite of our goodness, we are compelled to lead an unfortunate life, it is due to our past evil *kamma*. If, in spite of our wickedness, we are prosperous, it is also due to our past good *kamma*. The present good and bad deeds will, however, produce their due effects at the earliest possible opportunity.

What Kamma and Rebirth Explain

1. They account for the problem of suffering, for which we ourselves are responsible.
2. They explain the inequality of mankind.
3. They account for the arising of geniuses and child prodigies.
4. They explain why identical twins, who are physically alike, enjoying equal privileges, can exhibit totally different characteristics, mentally, morally, temperamentally, and intellectually.
5. They account for the dissimilarities among children of the same family, though heredity may account for the physical similarities.
6. They account for the extraordinary innate abilities of some men and women.
7. They account for the moral and intellectual differences between parents and children.
8. They explain how children apparently spontaneously develop such passions as greed, anger, and jealousy.
9. They account for innate likes and dislikes at first sight.
10. They explain how "a rubbish heap of evil and a treasure house of good" are found in us.
11. They account for the unexpected outbursts of emotion in a highly civilized person and for the sudden transformation of a criminal into a saint.
12. They explain how profligates are born to saintly parents and saintly children to profligates.
13. They explain how, in one sense, we are the result of what we once were, and we will be the result of what we currently are; and, in another sense, we are not absolutely what we once were, and we will not absolutely be what we currently are.
14. They explain the causes of untimely deaths and unexpected changes in fortune.
15. Above all, they account for the arising of omniscient, perfect religious teachers, like the *Buddhas*, who possess incomparable physical, mental, spiritual, and intellectual characteristics. ■

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30

Paṭicca-Samuppāda: Dependent Origination[627]

No God, no Brahmā, can be called
The creator of this wheel of life:
Empty phenomena roll on,
Dependent upon conditions all.[628]

Introduction

Here, we shall approach the profoundest of all Buddhist doctrines, *paṭicca-samuppāda*,[629] so-called "Dependent Origination," that is to say, the conditional arising of all those mental and physical phenomena generally summed up by the conventional names "living being," or "individual," or "person." *Paṭicca-samuppāda* shows the causes and conditions of all the suffering in the world and how, through the removal of these conditions, suffering may arise no more in the future. *Paṭicca-samuppāda*, in fact, shows that our present existence, with all its woe and suffering, is conditioned, or, more exactly said, caused, by the life-affirming volitions, or *kamma*, in a former life; and that, again, our future life depends upon the present life-affirming volitions, or *kamma*; and that, without these life-affirming volitions, no more future rebirth will take place; and that, thereby, deliverance will have been found from the round of rebirths, from the restless cycle of *saṁsāra*. This, then, is the final goal and purpose of the *Buddha's* Teaching, namely, deliverance from rebirth and suffering.

Paṭicca-samuppāda is not intended as an explanation of the beginning or primary cause of all things; and its first link, ignorance, or *avijjā*, is not to be considered the

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[627] This chapter is adapted from the Second Lecture under the Dona Alphina Ratnayaka Trust, University College, Colombo, Śri Lanka, presented in 1938 by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera, entitled "Paṭicca-Samuppāda: Dependent Origination" and published as part of *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures* (= The Wheel Publication no. 394/396) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1994]), pp. 32—57.

[628] *Visuddhimagga*.

[629] Sanskrit *prātītya-samutpāda*. *Paṭicca* means "because of" or "dependent upon," and *samuppāda* means "arising" or "origination." Although the literal meaning of the term is "arising because of" or "dependent arising" or "dependent origination," it is applied to the whole causal formula that consists of twelve interdependent causes and effects, technically called *paccaya* ("condition") and *paccayuppanna*.

causeless first principle out of which, in the course of time, all physical and conscious life has evolved. No one, not even a *Buddha*, can trace this process back to a first beginning. *Paṭicca-samuppāda* simply teaches the conditionality, or dependent nature, of all the manifold mental and physical phenomena of existence, of everything that happens, be it in the realm of the physical or the mental. *Paṭicca-samuppāda* shows that the sum of mental and physical phenomena known by the conventional name "person," or "individual," is not at all the mere play of blind chance, but that each phenomenon of existence is entirely dependent upon other phenomena as conditions; and that, therefore, with the removal of those phenomena that form the conditions for rebirth and suffering, rebirth and, therewith, all suffering will necessarily cease and come to an end. And this, as previously stated, is the vital point and goal of the *Buddha's* Teaching — deliverance from the cycle of rebirth (*saṁsāra*) with all its woe and suffering. Thus, *paṭicca-samuppāda* serves in the elucidation of the second and third Noble Truths about the origin and extinction of suffering, by explaining these two truths from their very foundations upwards and giving them a fixed philosophical form.

Paṭicca-samuppāda is one of the basic teachings of the *Buddha*. In describing it, the *Buddha* said to Venerable Ānanda:

> *"Deep, indeed, is Dependent Origination, Ānanda, and it appears deep. It is through not understanding, through not penetrating this doctrine, that these beings have become entangled like a matted ball of thread, become like muñja grass and rushes, unable to pass beyond the woeful states of existence, the cycles of rebirth."*

This is the doctrine that was referred to by Venerable Assaji when Sāriputta asked him to explain the doctrine of his teacher. Just two lines mentioning this doctrine were sufficient for Venerable Sāriputta to reach the first fruition stage of awakening:

> *"The Perfect One has explained the cause of all phenomena, and that which is their cessation — such is the doctrine of the Great Recluse."*

The doctrine is not something invented by the *Buddha* nor a cleverly worked out philosophical system open to modification and amendment. It is not the invention of some divine being. Dependent Origination is the ultimate reality of all phenomena — the arising of conditioned states and the cessation of conditioned states. This goes on whether there is a *Buddha* or not.

This ultimate truth of Dependent Origination was discovered by the *Buddha* through His Enlightenment. After He was Enlightened, He sat by the foot of the *bodhi*-tree at Gayā, experiencing the supreme bliss of emancipation. After seven days had passed, He emerged from His concentrated meditation and, during the first watch of the night, He thought over the arising aspect of Dependent Origination: "When this is, that comes to be. With the arising of this, that arises."

In the middle watch, He thought over Dependent Origination from the point of view of cessation: "When this is not, that does not come to be. With the cessation of this, that ceases." And, in the last watch of the night, the *Buddha* reflected on Dependent Origination both arising and ceasing: "This is the arising of suffering, the origin of suffering. This is the end of suffering."

> *"This world, Kaccāyana, usually bases [its views] on two things: on existence and non-existence.*
>
> *"Now, he who, with right insight, sees the arising of the world as it really is, does not hold with the non-existence of the world. And he who, with right insight, sees the passing away of the world as it really is, does not hold with the existence of the world.*
>
> *"The world, for the most part, is given to approaching, grasping, entering into and getting entangled [as regards views]. Whoever does not approach, grasp, and take his stand upon that proclivity towards clinging, approaching, and grasping that mental standpoint, namely, the thought: 'This is my soul,' he knows what arises is just suffering (dukkha) and what ceases is just suffering. Thus, he is not in doubt, is not perplexed, and, herein, he has knowledge that is not merely another's. Thus far, Kaccāyana, he has right view.*
>
> *"'Everything exists' — this is one extreme. 'Nothing exists' — this is the other extreme. Not approaching either of these extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the doctrine of the Middle Way. 'Conditioned by ignorance, volitional activities come to pass ...'"*[630]

The principle of the doctrine of Dependent Origination (also sometimes called "Conditioned Genesis" or "Dependent Arising") can be summed up in a short formula of four lines:

> *"When this arises, that is;*
> *This arising, that arises;*
> *When this is not, that is not;*
> *This ceasing, that ceases."*

On the principle of conditionality, relativity, and interdependence, the whole existence and continuity of life and its cessation are explained in the discourses of the *Buddha* in a detailed formula consisting of twelve links arranged in eleven propositions. The eleven propositions are as follows:

1. *Avijjā-paccayā saṁkhārā*: Ignorance (the first link) conditions *kamma*-formations (volitional actions [*cetanā*]): "Volition is action [*kamma*] — thus I say, O Monks; for as soon as volition arises, one does the action, be it by body, speech, or mind."

[630] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

2. *Saṁkhāra-paccayā viññāṇaṁ*: The *kamma*-formations (rebirth-producing volitional actions) condition (relinking) consciousness.

3. *Viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṁ*: Consciousness conditions mind-and-body (that is, mental and physical phenomena).

4. *Nāma-rūpa-paccayā saḷāyatanaṁ*: Mind-and-body conditions the six sense faculties (that is, the five physical sense organs plus the mind).

5. *Saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso*: The six sense faculties condition contact (that is, impression).

6. *Phassa-paccayā vedanā*: Contact conditions feeling (that is, sensation).

7. *Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*: Feeling conditions craving (that is, desire).

8. *Taṇhā-paccayā upādānaṁ*: Craving conditions attachment (that is, clinging).

9. *Upādāna-paccayā bhavo*: Attachment conditions the process of becoming (consisting of the active and passive life-process, that is to say, the rebirth-producing karmic process and, as its result, the rebirth process).

10. *Bhava-paccayā jāti*: The process of becoming conditions rebirth.

11. *Jāti-paccayā jarāmaraṇaṁ*: Rebirth conditions decay and death, likewise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. Thus arises, once again, the whole mass of suffering.

Let us look at the various steps in a little more detail. In past lives, we have done good and bad volitional acts with mind, word, and deed, because we were ignorant of the true reality of conditioned states. Consequently, our ignorance (*avijjā*) has led us to set loose these mental forces (*saṁkhāra*),[631] which have led to our present existence. Thus, not apprehending things as they really are (delusions) arises from this ignorance, and these delusions constitute the compositional factor (the formation of *kamma*).

In our present life, because of our past deeds, we have consciousness (*viññāṇa*), a life continuum, which is continually supporting this mind-body phenomenon (*nāma-rūpa*) which we call "I, mine."

> *"Feeling, perception, intention, contact, attention — these, O friends, are called "name." The four great elements and form dependent on them — these, O friends, are called 'form'."*

[631] *Saṁkhāra* is the singular, *saṁkhārā* the plural. Both forms are used throughout this chapter.

This mind-body phenomenon has six senses — sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and thinking and imagining —, which make it possible for there to be contact with the objects that stimulate the senses. This contact gives rise to sensations, or feelings (*vedanā*). We react to these sensations, which we find to be either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, and, consequently, craving (*taṇhā*) arises. We crave to prolong the agreeable sensations. We crave to get rid of the disagreeable sensations. So, this craving leads to attachment, or clinging (*upādāna*). Our clinging results in conditioned existence (*bhava*), and, during our new existence, we commit innumerable volitional acts that are either good or bad. In this way, we go to a new birth (*jāti*), which only brings, once more, old age, death, pain, grief, sorrow, lamentation, and despair.

This is the vicious circle of cause and effect. And we are responsible for the whole process. It is our desire and clinging that leads us to do good and bad actions that bind us to this whole process of suffering.

But it can all be stopped. If any one link in the chain is broken, the whole process will stop. And we are following the teachings in order to do just that.

> *"Just as, friend, two bundles of reeds were to stand one supporting the other, even so, consciousness is dependent on name-and-form, and name-and-form is dependent on consciousness, and the six spheres of sense on name-and-form, contact on the six spheres, feeling on contact, craving on feeling, grasping on craving, becoming on grasping, birth on becoming, and old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, unhappiness, and despair are dependent on birth. Thus is the arising of the entire mass of suffering. But, friend, if one of those two bundles of reeds is drawn out, the other one would fall down. Even so, friend, with the cessation of name-and-form, consciousness ceases, with the cessation of consciousness, name-and-form ceases, with the cessation of name-and-form, the six sense-spheres cease. Thus comes to be the cessation of this entire mass of suffering."*

There is one link in the chain that is particularly appropriate for lay practitioners to work on — the link between reaction and sensations. As we sit meditating, watching our passing sensations, the whole process is happening an innumerable number of times each second. Each sensation is the result of some volitional act done through ignorance in the past. If we can become engrossed in the knowing of *anicca* — the change taking place in a sensation —, we will be automatically developing that balanced attitude, that equanimity, which will enable us, one day, to cut through the link to the next step. We will be working towards cutting off the craving that we normally allow to arise. We will not be able to break the link until we are able to attain Liberation, and this takes much preparation.

This, in brief, is the whole *paṭicca-samuppāda*, or Dependent Origination. Now, let us carefully examine the eleven propositions one by one.

Proposition 1: Ignorance Conditions *Kamma*-Formations

The first proposition is: Ignorance (*avijjā*) conditions *kamma*-formations (rebirth-producing volitional actions).

Ignorance, or *avijjā*, also called delusion, or *moha*, means regarding transient things as permanent, miserable things as enjoyable, and egoless things as a self or ego. It means not understanding that all our existence is merely an ever-changing process of mental and physical phenomena; that these phenomena, in the ultimate sense, do not form any real permanent entity, or person, or ego; that there does not exist any permanent entity in, or behind, these transient physical and mental phenomena; and that, therefore, what we call "I," or "you," or "he," or "person," or "*Buddha*," etc. does not, in the ultimate sense (*paramattha*), possess any reality apart from these ever-changing physical and mental phenomena of existence. *Avijjā*, or *moha*, is the primary root-condition underlying all moral defilement and depravity. In *avijjā* are rooted all greed, hatred, conceit, envy, and misery in the world. It is the overcoming and extinction of *avijjā*, and, therewith, of all evil and misery, that is the final goal of the *Buddha's* Teaching, the ideal for any true practitioner. Hence, it is for these reasons that *avijjā* is mentioned first in the formula of *paṭicca-samuppāda*.

By *saṁkhārā*,[632] literally "*kamma*-formations," or simply "formations," are meant the rebirth-producing, karmically wholesome or unwholesome volitions (*cetanā*), or volitional activities. Thus, *saṁkhārā* are *kamma*-formations, or simply *kamma*.

All evil volitions (*cetanā*) manifested by body, speech, or mind are called *akusala*, or unwholesome, *kamma*-formations, since they bring about unhappy results in this and in the next life. *Kusala*, or wholesome, *kamma*-formations, on the other hand, are volitions (*cetanā*) that bring about happy and pleasant results in this and in the next life. But even these wholesome *kamma*-formations are still conditioned and influenced by *avijjā*, since, otherwise, they would not produce future rebirth. There is only one type of individual who no longer produces any wholesome or unwholesome *kamma*-formations, any life-affirming *kamma*, namely, the *Arahant*, the holy and fully-enlightened disciple of the *Buddha*. For, through deep insight into the true nature of this empty and ephemeral process of existence, he has become utterly detached from life, and he is forever freed from ignorance together with all its evil consequences, freed from any

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[632] *Saṁkhāra* is a multisignificant term that should be understood according to the context. Here, the term signifies wholesome (*kusala*), unwholesome (*akusala*), and unshakable (*āneñja*) volitions (*cetanā*), which constitute *kamma* that produces rebirth. The first (*kusala*) embraces all volitions in the eight types of beautiful (*sobhana*) moral consciousness and the five types of moral *rūpajjhāna* consciousness; the second (*akusala*), all volitions in the twelve types of immoral, or unwholesome, consciousness; and the third (*āneñja*), all volitions in the four types of moral *arūpajjhāna* consciousness.

As one of the five aggregates, *saṁkhāra* implies fifty of the fifty-two mental factors (*cetasika*), excluding feeling (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*).

The volitions of the four supramundane Path consciousnesses (*lokuttara maggacitta*) are not regarded as *saṁkhāra*, because they tend to eradicate ignorance. Wisdom (*paññā*) is predominant in supramundane types of consciousness, while volition (*cetanā*) is predominant in the mundane types of consciousness.

further rebirth.

Avijjā is an indispensable condition, by way of its presence and simultaneous arising, to all unwholesome *kamma*-formations, or volitional activities.[633] For example, whenever an evil manifestation of will, an evil *kamma*-formation, arises, at that very same moment, its arising is conditioned through the simultaneous arising and presence of *avijjā*. Without the co-arising of *avijjā*, there is no evil *kamma*-formation. When, for example, an infatuated man, filled with greed or anger, commits various evil deeds by body, speech, or mind, at that time, these evil *kamma*-formations are all entirely conditioned through the co-arising and presence of *avijjā*, or ignorance. Thus, if there is no *avijjā*, there are no evil *kamma*-formations. Therefore, it is said that *avijjā* is to its associated *kamma*-formations a condition by way of co-nascence, or simultaneous arising (*sahajāta*). Further, since there are no evil *kamma*-formations without the presence of *avijjā* and no *avijjā* without the presence of evil *kamma*-formations, therefore, both are, at any time and under all circumstances, also mutual conditions to each other (*aññam-aññapaccaya*). Thus, *avijjā* and the evil *kamma*-formations are inseparable. In so far as *avijjā* is an ever-present root of all evil *kamma*-formations, we say that *avijjā* is, to the unwholesome *kamma*-formations, an indispensable condition by way of root (*hetu*).

There is another and entirely different way in which *avijjā* may be a condition to unwholesome *kamma*-formations, that is, as inducement. For example, if a man, being filled with greed or anger, is induced by his infatuation and delusive thoughts to commit various crimes, such as murder, theft, adultery, etc., in that case, *avijjā* is the direct inducement and driving power for the subsequent arising of all those manifestations of will, that is, of all those unwholesome *kamma*-formations. In other words, through ignorance of the consequences of his evil actions, speech, or thoughts, he commits various crimes or other evil actions. In such a way, those unwholesome *kamma*-formations are conditioned by a preceding state of *avijjā* as their direct inducement (*pakat'ūpanissaya-paccaya*).

There is still another way in which *avijjā* may become an inducement to unwholesome *kamma*-formations, namely, as object of thinking. Suppose somebody remembers some evil and foolish pleasure that he once enjoyed, and, while he is pondering over that former foolish state, he finds delight in it and becomes again filled with infatuation and greed for it, or he becomes sad and despondent that he cannot enjoy it any more. As a consequence of brooding over such a foolish object, over such a state of ignorance, many evil, unwholesome states arise in his mind — in other words, by continually thinking about his former evil actions, speech, or thoughts, he is reinforcing them. In such a way, *avijjā* may be, to unwholesome *kamma*-formations, a condition by way of inducement as object (*āramman'upanissaya-paccaya*).

It is necessary at this point to mention that, for a detailed understanding of *paṭicca-samuppāda*, we should know at least something about the twenty-four different modes in which mental and physical phenomena may be the condition to other mental

[633] Ignorance is predominant in unwholesome activities, while it is latent in wholesome activities. Hence, both wholesome and unwholesome activities are regarded as caused by ignorance.

and physical phenomena. The entire *Paṭṭhāna*, the last book of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, which fills six bulky volumes, treats exclusively these twenty-four conditions, or *paccaya*, which it first describes and then applies to all the innumerable mental and physical phenomena of existence. Here, we shall consider only the most prominent ones, which we have already alluded to and applied to *avijjā*, namely, *hetu-paccaya*, or root condition, *sahajāta-paccaya*, or condition by way of mutuality, *upanissaya-paccaya*, or condition either by way of direct inducement (*pakat'upanissaya*) or by inducement through object (*ārammaṇ'upanissaya*). It may further be noted that all these translations of technical Pāḷi terms are only very inadequate makeshifts and should be taken as such. Therefore, these technical terms will be given repeatedly in both languages, English as well as Pāḷi.

The *Paṭṭhāna* Commentary compares the *hetu-paccaya*, or root condition, to the root of a tree. The tree rests on its roots, and it has life only as long as these roots are not destroyed. In the same way, all karmically wholesome and unwholesome *kamma*-formations are, at any time, conditioned through the presence and co-nascence, or simultaneity, of their respective wholesome or unwholesome roots. The three unwholesome roots are *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*, that is, greed, hatred, and delusion. The three wholesome roots are *alobha*, *adosa*, and *amoha*, that is, non-greed, or unselfishness, non-hatred, or kindness, and non-delusion, or knowledge.

Let us now consider *sahajāta-paccaya*, the condition by way of co-nascence. *Sahajāta* literally means "arisen together" or "arising together," hence, the term "co-nascence," or "simultaneous arising." This condition of co-nascence applies, above all, to consciousness and its concomitant mental phenomena, such as feeling, perception, volition, sense-impression, attention, etc. For consciousness and all these mental phenomena are mutually conditioned through their simultaneous arising. One cannot arise or exist without the other. All are inseparably associated. Thus, if we say that feeling is to consciousness a condition by way of co-nascence, we mean to say that, without the simultaneous arising of feeling, consciousness will never be able to arise. It is exactly the same way with all the other mental phenomena.

Once, a well-known Buddhist author declared that there may be painful feeling without consciousness, for example, during a painful operation while being under anesthesia. This, indeed, is a most extraordinary error. How can it ever be possible to feel pain without being conscious of it? Painful feeling is a mental phenomenon and, as such, is inseparable from consciousness and the other mental phenomena. If we do not perceive pain and are not conscious of it, how can we feel pain? Thus, consciousness, feeling, perception, and all the other mental phenomena are mutually conditioned by way of co-nascence.

Now, let us consider *upanissaya-paccaya*, the condition by way of inducement. This condition is of various kinds, and it forms combinations with certain other conditions. It applies to a very wide field, in fact, to anything whatsoever. We shall treat this condition here only in a very general way, without making any distinctions. Anything past or future, physical or mental, real or imaginary may become an inducement to the arising of mental phenomena, or of actions, or of occurrences.

So, for example, money, as an object of our desire, may become an inducement to our making the necessary exertions to get it, or it may also become an inducement to theft and robbery. Faith, knowledge, mental concentration, etc. may be a direct inducement to various noble and unselfish actions. Good or bad friends may be a direct inducement to good or bad conduct. Suitable or unsuitable climate, food, dwelling, etc. may be an inducement to physical health or ill-health; physical health or ill-health to mental health or ill-health. Thus, all these things are conditioned through other things by way of inducement.

Now, we shall consider *ārammaṇa-paccaya*, the condition by way of object. The object may be either one of the five sense-objects, that is, visible object, sound, smell, taste, or bodily impression, or it may be any object of the mind. Anything whatever may become the object of mind, be it physical or mental, past, present, or future, real or imaginary. Thus, the visible object, consisting of differences of color, light and dark, is called the object-condition to eye-consciousness, or the visual sense. Likewise with the other four senses. Without a physical sense-object, no sense-consciousness will ever arise. Further, past evil deeds, through being the object of our thinking, may become an inducement, or *upanissaya*, to repeat the same evil deeds, or they may arouse our disgust and repentance. Thus, past evil deeds, by wrong thinking about them, may become an inducement to an immoral life by way of object, while, on the other hand, by right thinking about them, the same past evil deeds may become an inducement to a moral life. In a similar way, good deeds, by right thinking about them, may become an inducement to further noble deeds, but, by wrong thinking about one's own good deeds, they may become an inducement to self-conceit and vanity and many other unwholesome states.

Hence, even *avijjā* may become a condition to noble and wholesome *kamma*-formations. To show this, let us return to the first proposition: "Ignorance conditions *kamma*-formations." How may such an unfortunate state as *avijjā* become a condition to noble and wholesome *kamma*-formations? It may become so in two ways, either by way of direct inducement or by inducement as mental object. This can be illustrated by an example. At the time of the *Buddha*, many a heretic, induced by mere vanity and delusion, went to the *Buddha* and tried to defeat the Master through dialectics. However, after a short debate, the heretics would inevitably be converted: they became virtuous followers and life-long supporters of the Blessed One, and some even attained Arahantship. Here, all these virtuous actions, even the attainment of Arahantship, were conditioned by former *avijjā* as an inducement; had this delusive idea of defeating the *Buddha* through dialectics not arisen in their minds, they, perhaps, might never, in their lives, have even visited the Blessed One. Thus, *avijjā* was, to their noble and wholesome *kamma*-formations, a condition by way of inducement (*pakat'ūpanissaya*). Further, suppose we take *avijjā* as object of our contemplation, considering it as something to be avoided, to be rejected, considering it as the root-cause of all misery in the world, then, we, thereby, may produce many noble and wholesome *kamma*-formations. In this case, *avijjā* is, to these wholesome *kamma*-formations, a condition by way of inducement as object (*ārammaṇ'ūpanissaya*).

It should be noted here that *avijjā*, or ignorance, though the main condition for

kamma-formations, is in no way the only condition for them, and so are the *kamma*-formations to consciousness, etc. Each of the conditionally arising phenomena of *paṭicca-samuppāda* is dependent on various conditions besides those given in the formula, and all may be interrelated and interdependent in manifold ways. Thus, it should be remembered that each of these factors is conditioned as well as conditioning. Therefore, they are all relative, interdependent, and interconnected. Hence, no first cause is accepted by Buddhism. Dependent Origination should be considered as a circle, not as a chain.

Here, it is necessary to note the difference between the use of the word "condition" versus the word "cause." This word "cause" is often used in a very vague and wrong sense. "Cause" really refers to that thing which, by inner necessity, and if all the necessary conditions are present, is, in time, followed by another thing as its "result," so that already in the cause the future is lying latent, as it were, just as, in the mango seed, the future mango tree lies latent.

And, just as, from the mango seed, only a mango tree may result, never an apple nor any other tree, likewise, a cause may result only in just one single thing of a similar character, never in various things nor in things of a different character. If, for example, a man grows furious upon being scolded, people would generally say that the person doing the scolding was the cause of the rage. But, this is not a valid statement. The cause of the man's rage really lies within himself, in his own character, not in the person scolding him. The words of the person doing the scolding were merely an inducement to the manifestation of his latent rage. The word "cause" signifies only one of the many kinds of conditions, and it should, according to Buddhist philosophy, be reserved for *kamma*, that is, the rebirth-producing volitional activities (*cetanā*) bound up with wholesome or unwholesome roots (*hetu*), constituting the cause of rebirth and resulting in rebirth as their effect, or *vipāka*.

Proposition 2: The *Kamma*-Formations Condition Consciousness

The second proposition is: The *kamma*-formations condition (relinking) consciousness (*viññāṇa*).[634] In other words, through *kamma*, or volitional activities in the previous birth, the conscious life in the present birth is conditioned.

At his point, it is necessary to state that the five aggregates (corporeal phenomena [matter], feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness) refer here only to *kamma*-resultant (*vipāka*), neutral phenomena, thus representing the "passive" side of life. However, the five active links (*avijjā* [ignorance], *saṁkhārā* [*kamma*-formations], *taṇhā* [craving, desire], *upādāna* [attachment, clinging], and *kamma-bhava* [the process of becoming]) constitute *kamma*, thus representing the "active" side of life. Hence, the five aggregates, the passive side of life, are to be considered the five results (*vipāka*),

[634] *Viññāṇa* strictly denotes the nineteen types of rebirth consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*) described in the *Abhidhamma*. All thirty-two types of resultant consciousness (*vipāka citta*) experienced during one's lifetime are also implied by the term.

while the five active links are to be considered the five causes. Thus, the life-affirming will, or volition (*cetanā*), manifested in these five karmic causes, is the seed from which all life has sprung and from which it will spring again in the future. The second proposition therefore shows that our present conscious life is the result of our *kamma*-formations produced in our past life and that, without these prenatal *kamma*-formations as the necessary cause, no conscious life would ever have sprung up in our mother's womb.

Hence, the *kamma*-formations are to the rebirth-consciousness of the embryonic being, at its conception in the mother's womb, a condition by way of *kamma*, or cause. And so are the *kamma*-formations to all the morally neutral elements of consciousness. Thus also, the five kinds of sense-consciousness with desirable and agreeable objects are the result, or *vipāka*, of the prenatal wholesome *kamma*-formations, while those with undesirable and disagreeable objects are the result of unwholesome *kamma*-formations.

Proposition 3: Consciousness Conditions Mind-and-Body

Now, we come to the third proposition: Consciousness conditions mind-and-body (that is, mental and physical phenomena).[635] The meaning of this proposition can be inferred from the Mahānidāna Sutta (*Dīgha-Nikāya*, no. 15), where it is said:

> *"If consciousness (viññāṇa) were not to appear in the mother's womb, would the mental and physical phenomena (nāma-rūpa) arise?"*

The mental phenomena (*nāma*) refer here to those seven universal mental phenomena inseparably bound up with all *kamma*-resultant consciousness, even with the five kinds of sense-consciousness. These seven inseparable universal mental phenomena are: (1) feeling; (2) perception; (3) impression; (4) volition; (5) vitality; (6) attention; and (7) concentration — in *kamma*-resultant mind-consciousness, they are increased by three or four further phenomena. The physical phenomena (*rūpa*) refer to the body (*kāya*) and its various organs, faculties, and functions.

Now, how are the mental phenomena, or *nāma*, conditioned through *viññāṇa*, or

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[635] *Nāma* here means the three aggregates — feeling (*vedanā*); perception (*saññā*); and mental formations (*saṁkhāra*) — that arise simultaneously with the relinking consciousness. *Rūpa* means the three decads — body (*kāya*); sex (*bhāva*); and seat of consciousness (*vatthu*) — that also arise simultaneously with the relinking consciousness conditioned by past *kamma*.

The body decad is composed of the four elements — (1) the element of extension (*paṭhavī*); (2) the element of cohesion (*āpo*); (3) the element of heat (*tejo*); and (4) the element of motion (*vāyo*); its four derivatives — (5) color (*vaṇṇa*); (6) odor (*gandha*); (7) taste (*rasa*); and (8) nutritive essence (*ojā*); as well as (9) vitality (*jīvitindriya*) and (10) body (*kāya*). Here, *kāya* means the sensitive part of the body (*pasāda*).

The sex decad and the base decad also consist of the first nine and sex (*bhāva*) and seat of consciousness (*vatthu*) respectively.

Sex (gender) is determined by past *kamma* at the very conception of the body. It is not developed at the moment of conception, but the potentiality is latent.

consciousness? And how the physical phenomena, or *rūpa*?

Any state of consciousness, as already explained, is to its concomitant mental phenomena, such as feeling, etc., a condition by way of co-nascence, or simultaneous arising (*sahajāta-paccaya*). Consciousness cannot arise and exist without feeling, nor feeling without consciousness, and, furthermore, all the other mental phenomena which belong to the same state of consciousness are inseparably bound up with it into a single unit and have no independent existence. These mental phenomena are, as it were, only the different aspects of those units of consciousness which, like lightning, flash up every moment and immediately thereafter disappear forever.

But how may consciousness (*viññāṇa*) be a condition for the various physical phenomena (*rūpa*)?

In planes of existence where both matter and mind exist, for example, in the human realm, at the moment of conception, consciousness is an absolutely necessary condition for the arising of organic physical phenomena — it is a condition by way of co-nascence. If there is no consciousness, no conception takes place, and no organic material phenomena (*rūpa*) appear. During life-continuity, however, consciousness is a condition by way of post-nascence, or later-arising (*pacchājāta-paccaya*), to the already-arisen physical phenomena, and also by way of nutriment (*āhāra*), because consciousness forms a prop and support for the upkeep of the body. Just as the feeling of hunger is a condition for the feeding and upkeep of the already-arisen body, in like manner, consciousness is a condition and support by its post-nascence, or later arising, to this already-arisen body. If consciousness were to arise no more, the physical organs would cease their functioning, lose their faculties, and the body would die. It is in this way that we have to understand the proposition: Consciousness conditions mind-and-body (that is, mental and physical phenomena).

Proposition 4: Mind-and-Body Conditions the Six Sense Faculties

Now, we come to the fourth proposition: Mind-and-body conditions the six sense faculties (that is, the five physical sense organs plus the mind). The first five of these faculties are the five physical sense organs, eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body; the sixth faculty, the mind faculty (*manāyatana*), is a collective term for the many different classes of consciousness, that is, for the five kinds of sense-consciousness and the many kinds of mind-consciousness. Hence, five faculties are physical phenomena, namely, eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, and the sixth faculty is identical with consciousness.

In which way, now, are the mental and physical phenomena a condition for the five physical faculties, or sense-organs, and how are they a condition for the sixth faculty, or consciousness? Here we really get four questions:

1. The first question is: "How are the mental phenomena (*nāma*) a condition for the five physical faculties (*āyatana*), or sense-organs?" The seven inseparable mental phenomena associated with sense-consciousness, such as (1) feeling; (2) perception;

(3) impression; (4) volition; (5) vitality; (6) attention; and (7) concentration, are to the five physical faculties, or sense-organs, a condition by way of post-nascence, and in other ways. The mental activity during life is a necessary support to the five physical faculties, or sense-organs, already produced at birth, as previously explained.

2. The second question is: "How are mental phenomena a condition to the mind faculty (*manāyatana*), or consciousness?" The mental phenomena, as feeling, perception, volition, etc., are, at any time, to the mind faculty, or consciousness, a condition by way of simultaneous arising, or co-nascence (*sahajāta-paccaya*).

   As already noted, consciousness cannot arise without the co-arising of feeling and the other phenomena, because consciousness and all its mental concomitants are inseparably bound up together and mutually dependent upon one another. Thus, the mental phenomena are a condition to the five sense faculties, or sense-organs, as well as to the mind faculty (*manāyatana*), or consciousness.

3. Now, we come to the third question: "How are the physical phenomena (*rūpa*) a condition for the five physical faculties (*āyatana*), or sense-organs?" The four primary elements, that is, solidity, fluidity, heat, and motion, are, to any of the five physical sense faculties, or sense-organs, a condition by way of simultaneous arising (*sahajāta-paccaya*), but, during life, these four physical elements are to the five faculties, or sense-organs, a condition by way of foundation (*nissaya*), on which the sense-organs are entirely dependent. Moreover, the physical phenomenon "vitality" (*rūpa-jīvit'indriya*) is to the five faculties, or sense-organs, a condition by way of presence (*atthi-paccaya*), etc. In other words, the five faculties, or sense-organs, depend on the presence of physical life, without which the five sense organs could not exist.

   The physical phenomenon "nutrition" (*āhāra*) is to the five physical faculties a condition by way of presence, because the five sense-organs can only exist as long as they get their necessary nutriment. Thus, it has been shown how the physical phenomena, or *rūpa*, are a condition for the five physical faculties, or *āyatana*.

4. There remains only the fourth question: "How are the physical phenomena (*rūpa*) a condition for the mind faculty (*manāyatana*), or consciousness?" The five physical phenomena, as eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, are, to the five kinds of sense-consciousness, that is, to seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and bodily impression, a condition by way of foundation (*nissaya*) and by way or pre-nascence, presence, etc. These five kinds of sense-consciousness, during life, cannot arise without the pre-arising (*purejāta*) of the five physical sense-organs as their foundation (*nissaya*). Therefore, without the pre-arising and presence of the eye, no seeing, without the pre-arising and presence of the ear, no hearing, etc., so that, if these five sense-organs are destroyed, no corresponding sense-consciousness can arise any longer.

In a similar way, the physical organ of mind is the condition for the various stages

of mind-consciousness. In the canonical books, no special physical organ is mentioned by name as the physical foundation of the mind-consciousness, neither the brain nor the heart, though the heart (*hadaya*) is taught as such by all the Commentaries, as well as by the general Buddhist tradition. For the Buddhist, it matters little whether it is the heart or the brain or any other organ that constitutes the physical faculty of mind.

The *Buddha* has stated:

> *"Because of eye and visible forms, visual consciousness arises; contact is the conjunction of the three. Contact begets feelings; what is felt is perceived; what is perceived is contemplated. Thus arise thought processes with reference to visible forms, either in the past, the present, or the future. Because of ear and sounds, auditory consciousness arises; because of nose and odors, olfactory consciousness arises; because of tongue and objects of taste, taste consciousness arises; because of body and tangibles, tactile consciousness arises; because of mind and mental objects, mind consciousness arises. The conjunction of these three is contact."*

Thus, we have seen how the physical phenomena (*rūpa*) are a condition to the mind faculty (*manāyatana*), or consciousness, and, herewith, we have settled the meaning of the proposition: Mind-and-body conditions the six sense faculties (that is, the five physical sense organs plus the mind).

Proposition 5: The Six Sense Faculties Condition Contact

Now, we come to the fifth proposition: The six sense faculties condition contact (that is, impression). In other words, visual contact is conditioned through the eyes, sound contact is conditioned through the ears, smell contact is conditioned through the nose, taste contact is conditioned through the tongue, bodily, or tactile, contact is conditioned through the body, and mental contact is conditioned through the mind faculty (*manāyatana*), or consciousness.

The five physical faculties (*āyatana*) are, to their corresponding sense-impressions (*phassa*), a condition by way of foundation (*nissaya*) and by way of pre-nascence (*purejāta*) and in other ways as well. The five sense-organs are not only the foundation for consciousness, as we have seen, but, also, for all its mental concomitants, hence, also, for sense-impression, or contact. And, inasmuch as these five faculties, or sense-organs, have already come into existence at birth, they are called a pre-nascent condition (*purejāta-paccaya*) to the later-arising five sense-impressions.

The mind faculty, or consciousness, is, at any time, to its concomitant sensory or mental impression, a condition by way of simultaneous arising, or co-nascence, etc. In other words, eye-consciousness arises simultaneously with visual impression, ear-consciousness with sound impression, nose-consciousness with smell impression, tongue-consciousness with taste impression, bodily-consciousness with body impression, and

mind-consciousness with mental impression.

Also, the external physical objects (the five sense objects, such as visual object, sound, smell, etc.) are an indispensable condition to the arising of sense-impression. So, visual impression could never arise without the pre-arising of the visible object, sound impression never without the pre-arising of the sound-object, etc. Hence, the arising of the five sense-impressions (*phassa*) depends on the pre-arising of the visual object, the sound object, etc. Therefore, the arising of the five sense-impressions depends just as much on the pre-arising and presence of the five physical sense-objects as on the pre-arising of the five sense-organs, as already stated. Thus, sense-impression is also conditioned through the five external physical faculties, that is, through the five sense-objects.

Further, inasmuch as all the physical sense-objects may also become objects of mind-consciousness, they, therefore, are also a condition for mind-consciousness as well as for its concomitant phenomena, such as mental impression (*phassa*), etc. Thus, without physical sense-organ and physical sense-object, there is no sense-impression, and, without mind and mind-object, no mental impression. Therefore, it is said: "The six sense faculties condition contact (that is, impression)."

Proposition 6: Contact Conditions Feeling

Thereafter follows the sixth proposition: Contact conditions feeling (that is, sensation).[636] There are six kinds of feeling: feeling associated with visual impression, feeling associated with sound impression, feeling associated with smell impression, feeling associated with taste impression, feeling associated with bodily impression, and feeling associated with mental impression. Bodily feeling may be either agreeable or disagreeable. Mental feeling may be either agreeable, that is, joyful, or disagreeable, that is, sad, or it may be indifferent. The feelings associated with visual, sound, and taste impression, are, as such, always indifferent, but they may have either desirable or undesirable objects according to the *kamma* in a previous life. Whatever the feeling may be, pleasant or painful, happy, unhappy, or indifferent,[637] whether feeling of body or of

[636] Strictly speaking, it is feeling that experiences an object when it comes in contact with the senses. It is this feeling that experiences the desirable or undesirable fruits of an action done in this or in a previous birth. Besides this mental state, there is no soul or any other agent to experience the result of the action.

Feeling (*vedanā*), or sensation, is a mental state common to all types of consciousness. Chiefly, there are three kinds of feelings: (1) pleasurable (*somanassa*); (2) unpleasant (*domanassa*); and (3) neutral (*adukkhamasukkha*). Together with physical pain (*dukkha*) and physical happiness (*sukha*), there are five kinds of feelings. The neutral feeling is also termed *upekkhā*, which means "indifference" or "equanimity."

[637] According to *Abhidhamma*, there is only one type of consciousness accompanied by pain. Similarly, there is only one accompanied by happiness. Two are connected with an unpleasant feeling. Of the 89 types of consciousness, either a pleasurable or a neutral feeling are found in the remaining 85.

It should be understood that nibbānic bliss is not associated with any kind of feeling. Nibbānic bliss is certainly the highest happiness (*nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ*), but it is the happiness of relief from suffering. It is not the enjoyment of any pleasurable object.

mind, any feeling is conditioned either through one of the five sense-impressions or through mental impression. And these impressions (*phassa*) are a condition to their associated feeling (*vedanā*) by way of co-nascence, or simultaneous arising, and in many other ways.

As previously stated, all the mental phenomena in one and the same state of consciousness, hence, also, impression (*phassa*) and feeling (*vedanā*), are necessarily dependent upon one another by their simultaneous arising, their presence, their association, etc. But, to any feeling associated with the different stages of mind-consciousness following upon a sense-impression, the preceding visual or other sense-impression is an inducement by way of proximity (*anantar'ūpanissaya-paccaya*). In other words, the preceding sense-impression is a decisive support, or inducement, to any feeling bound up with the succeeding mind-consciousness.

Thus, we have seen how, through sensory and mental impression (*phassa*), feeling (*vedanā*) is conditioned.

Proposition 7: Feeling Conditions Craving

Next comes the seventh proposition: Feeling conditions craving (that is, desire).[638]

There are six kinds of craving (*taṇhā*) corresponding to the six senses, namely, craving for visible objects, craving for sounds, craving for odors, craving for tastes, craving for bodily impressions, craving for mental impressions. If the craving for any of these objects is connected with the desire for sensory enjoyment, it is called "sensory craving" (*kāma-taṇhā*). If connected with the belief in eternal personal existence (*sassata-diṭṭhi*), it is called "craving for existence" (*bhava-taṇhā*). If connected with the belief in self-annihilation (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*) at death, it is called "craving for self-annihilation" (*vibhava-taṇhā*).

Any (*kamma*-resultant and morally) neutral feeling (*vedanā*), whether agreeable, disagreeable, or indifferent, whether happy or unhappy feeling, may be a condition to the subsequent craving (*taṇhā*), either by way of simple inducement or of inducement as object. For example, conditioned through pleasurable feeling due to the appearance of attractive persons or things, there may arise craving for such visible objects; or, conditioned through pleasurable feeling due to pleasant food, craving for tastes may arise; or, thinking of those feelings of pleasure and enjoyment that one may obtain through money, one may become filled with craving for money and pleasure; or, pondering over past pleasures and feelings of happiness, one may again become filled with craving and longing for such pleasures; or, thinking of heavenly bliss and joy, one may become filled with craving for rebirth in such heavenly worlds. In all these cases, pleasant feeling (*vedanā*) is to craving (*taṇhā*) either a condition by way of simple inducement or inducement as object of thinking.

[638] Besides ignorance, craving is the other most important factor in "Dependent Origination."

But not only agreeable and happy feeling, but, also, disagreeable and unhappy feeling may become a condition for craving. For example, to a man being tormented with bodily pain or oppressed in mind, the craving may arise to be released from such misery. Thus, through feeling unhappy and dissatisfied with his miserable lot, a poor man, or a beggar, or an outcast, or a sick man, or a prisoner, may become filled with longing and craving for release from such a condition. In all these cases, unpleasant and miserable feeling (*vedanā*) of body and mind forms a condition for craving (*taṇhā*) by way of inducement, without which such craving might never have arisen. Even expected future feeling of happiness may, by thinking about it, become a strong incentive, or inducement, to craving. Thus, whatever craving arises depends in some way or other on feeling. Therefore, it is said: "Feeling conditions craving (that is, desire)."

Proposition 8: Craving Conditions Attachment

We have now reached the eighth proposition: Craving conditions attachment (that is, clinging). *Upādāna*, or clinging, is a name for developed or intensified craving. In the texts, we find four kinds of clinging mentioned: (1) sensory clinging; (2) clinging to wrong views; (3) clinging to belief in the moral efficacy of mere outward rules and rituals; and (4) clinging to the belief in either an eternal or a temporary ego-entity. The first one, sensory clinging, refers to objects of sensory enjoyment, while the three other kinds of clinging are connected with wrong views.

Whenever clinging to views or rituals arises, at that very moment, craving must also arise; without the simultaneous arising of craving, there would be no such attachments to these views and rituals. Hence, craving, or *taṇhā*, is a condition for these kinds of clinging, or *upādāna*, by way of co-nascence (*sahajāta-paccaya*). But, besides this, craving may also be a condition to such a kind of clinging by way of inducement (*upanissaya-paccaya*). Suppose a foolish person, who is craving for rebirth in heaven, thinks that, by following certain outward moral rules or by mere belief in a creator, he will attain the object of his desire. So, he firmly attaches himself to the practice of mere outward rules and rituals or to the belief in a creator. In this case, craving is, for such a kind of clinging, a condition by way of inducement, or *upanissaya-paccaya*.

To sensory clinging, or *kāmupādāna*, however, craving may only be a condition by way of direct inducement. The craving for sense-objects, that is, the craving for gratification of the senses, itself gradually develops and turns into strong sensory clinging and attachment, or *kāmupādāna*. For example, craving and desire for objects of sensory enjoyment, for money, for food, for gambling, for drinking, or whatever, may gradually grow into a strong habit, into a firm attachment and clinging, even into an addiction.

Thus, it has been shown how craving is a condition for clinging. As it is said: "Craving conditions attachment (that is, clinging)."

Proposition 9: Attachment Conditions the Process of Becoming

Next, we come to the ninth proposition: Attachment conditions the process of becoming (consisting of the active and passive life-process, that is to say, the rebirth-producing karmic process and, as its result, the rebirth process). Now, this process of becoming, or existence, really consists of two processes: (1) the *kamma*-process (*kamma-bhava*), that is, the karmically active side of life, and (2) the *kamma*-resultant rebirth process (*upapatti-bhava*), that is, the karmically passive and morally neutral side of life. The karmically active side of this life-process is, as we have seen, represented by five links, namely, (1) ignorance (*avijjā*); (2) *kamma*-formations (*saṁkhāra*); (3) craving (*taṇhā*); (4) clinging (*upādāna*); and (5) *kamma*-process (*kamma-bhava*). The passive side of life is represented by five different links, namely, (1) consciousness (*viññāṇa*); (2) mental and physical phenomena (*nāma-rūpa*); (3) the six sense faculties (*saḷāyatana*); (4) impression, or contact (*phassa*); and (5) feeling (*vedanā*). The five passive links, such as consciousness, etc., refer only to *kamma*-resultant phenomena and not to such as are associated with active *kamma*. The five active links, such as ignorance, etc., are the causes of the five passive links of the future, as *kamma*-resultant consciousness, etc., and, thus, these five passive links are the results of the five active links. In that way, *paṭicca-samuppāda* may be represented by twenty links: five causes in the past life, and five results in the present one; five causes in the present life, and five results in the future one. As it is said in the *Visuddhimagga* (Chapter XVII):

Five causes were there in the past,
Five fruits are found in the present life;
Five causes which are now produced,
Five fruits are reaped in future life.

Let us here call attention to the definition of the term "cause" as "that which by inner necessity is followed, in time, by its result." There are twenty-four modes of conditioning, but only one of them should be called "cause," namely, *kamma*.

Though this karmic cause is, in time, followed by its result, it, nevertheless, may depend on (but not be produced by) a preceding *kamma*-result as its inducement condition. Thus, for example, feeling, within *paṭicca-samuppāda*, is a *kamma*-result; but still, at the same time, it is an inducement-condition to the subsequent arising of craving, which latter is a *kamma* cause.

Now, let us return to the proposition: Attachment conditions the process of becoming (consisting of the active and passive life-process, that is to say, the rebirth-producing karmic process and, as its result, the rebirth process); that is, (1) the *kamma*-process (*kamma-bhava*) and, thereafter, in the next life, and (2) the *kamma*-resultant rebirth process (*upapatti-bhava*). The *kamma*-process (*kamma-bhava*) in this ninth proposition is, correctly speaking, a collective name for rebirth-producing volition (*cetanā*) together with all the mental phenomena associated therewith, while the second link, *kamma*-formations (*saṁkhāra*), designates, as such, merely rebirth-producing volition. But, in reality, both links amount to one and the same thing, namely, *kamma*.

Clinging, or *upādāna*, may be an inducement to all kinds of evil and unwholesome *kamma*. Sensory clinging, or attachment to sense-objects and sensory enjoyment, that is, craving for gratification of the senses, may be a direct inducement to murder, robbery, theft, adultery, envy, hatred, revenge, or whatever — to many evil actions of body, speech, and mind. Clinging to the blind belief in mere outward rules and rituals may lead to self-complacency, mental laziness and stagnation, to contempt of others, presumption, intolerance, fanaticism, and cruelty. In all these cases, clinging (*upādāna*) is, to the *kamma*-process (*kamma-bhava*), a condition by way of inducement and is a direct inducement to evil volitional activities of body, speech, or mind. Moreover, clinging is also a condition to any evil *kamma*-process by way of simultaneous arising.

Thus, it has been shown how clinging (*upādāna*) is the condition of the *kamma*-process (*kamma-bhava*). As has been said: "Attachment conditions the process of becoming (consisting of the active and passive life-process, that is to say, the rebirth-producing karmic process and, as its result, the rebirth process)."

Proposition 10: The Process of Becoming Conditions Rebirth

This brings us to the tenth proposition: The process of becoming conditions rebirth. This means that the *kamma*-process (*kamma-bhava*), dominated by the life-affirming volitions (*cetanā*), is the cause of rebirth. Rebirth includes here the entire embryonic process which, in the human world, begins with conception in the mother's womb and ends with childbirth. Thus, *kamma* volition is the seed from which all life germinates, just as the tiny mango plant germinates from the mango seed, which, in the course of time, turns into a mighty mango tree. But, how does one know that the *kamma*-process (*kamma-bhava*), or *kamma* volition (*cetanā*), is really the cause of rebirth? The *Visuddhimagga* (Chapter XVII) gives the following answer:

Though the outward conditions at the birth of beings may be absolutely the same, there still can be seen a difference in beings with regard to their character, whether wretched or noble, etc. Even though the outward conditions, such as sperm (of father) and ovum (of mother), may be the same, it can still be seen that there are differences between beings, even if they are twins. These differences cannot be without reason, inasmuch as they can be noticed at any time and in any being. They can have no other cause than the pre-natal *kamma*-process. As also for the life of those beings who have been reborn, no other reason can be found — therefore, those differences must be due to the pre-natal *kamma*-process. *Kamma*, or volition, indeed, is the cause for the difference among beings with regard to their character, as high, low, etc. Therefore, the *Buddha* has said: "*kamma* divides beings into high and low." In this way, we should understand that the karmic process is the cause of rebirth.

Thus, according to Buddhism, the present rebirth is the result of the craving, clinging, and *kamma* volitions in the past birth. And the craving, clinging, and *kamma* volitions in the present birth are the cause of future rebirth. But, just as in this ever-

changing mental and physical process of existence, nothing can be found that passes even from one moment to the next, in just such a way, no abiding element can be found, no soul, no ego-entity, which would pass from one birth to the next. In this ever-repeated process of rebirth, in the absolute sense, no ego-entity is to be found outside of these continually arising and passing phenomena. Thus, correctly speaking, it is not oneself and not one's person that is reborn, nor is it another person that is reborn. All such terms as "person," or "individual," or "man," or "I," or "you," or "mine," etc., do not refer to any real entity — they are merely conventional terms used for the sake of convenience, in Pāḷi, *vohāra-vacana*, "conventional terms," and there is really nothing to be found outside of these conditionally arising and passing mental and physical phenomena. Therefore, the *Buddha* has said:

> *"To believe that the doer of the deed will be the same as the one who experiences its result [in the next life], this is the one extreme. To believe that the doer of the deed and the one who experiences its result are two different persons, this is the other extreme. The Perfect One has avoided both these extremes and has taught the truth that lies in the middle of both, that is: Through ignorance, the kamma-formations are conditioned; through the kamma-formations, consciousness [in the subsequent birth]; through consciousness, the mental and physical phenomena; through the mental and physical phenomena, the six sense faculties; through the six sense faculties, impression [contact]; through impression, feeling; through feeling, craving [desire]; through craving, clinging [attachment]; through clinging, the [karmic] life-process [becoming]; through the [karmic] life-process, rebirth; through rebirth, decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. Thus arises the whole mass of suffering."*

The phenomenality and egolessness of existence, as well as the denial of a Creator God, have been beautifully expressed in three verses of the *Visuddhimagga*:

> *No doer of the deeds is found,*
> *No one who ever reaps their fruits;*
> *Empty phenomena roll on:*
> *This alone is the correct view.*
>
> *And, while the deeds and their results*
> *Roll on and on, conditioned all,*
> *There is no first cause to be found,*
> *Just as it is with seed and tree ...*
>
> *No God, no Brahmā, can be called*
> *The creator of this wheel of life:*
> *Empty phenomena roll on,*
> *Dependent upon conditions all.*

In hearing that Buddhism teaches that everything is determined by conditions, someone might come to the conclusion that Buddhism teaches some sort of fatalism or that man has no free will, or that will is not free. Now, with regard to the two questions: (1) "Has man a free will?" and (2) "Is will free?," Buddhism would say that both of these questions are to be rejected as being wrongly put and are, therefore, unanswerable.

The first question, "Has man a free will?," is to be rejected for the reason that, outside of these ever-changing mental and physical phenomena, in the absolute sense, no such thing or entity can be found that we could call "man," so that "man," as such, is merely a conventional term without any basis in reality.

The second question "Is will free?," is to be rejected for the reason that "will" is only a momentary mental phenomenon, just like feeling, consciousness, etc. and, thus, does not yet exist before it arises, and that, therefore, one could not, properly speaking, ask whether such a non-existent thing is free or not free. The only admissible question would be: "Is the arising of will independent of conditions, or is it conditioned?" But the same question would equally apply to all the other mental phenomena as well as to all the physical phenomena, in other words, to everything and every occurrence whatsoever. And the answer would be: Be it "will," or "feeling," or any other mental or physical phenomenon, the arising of anything whatsoever depends on conditions, and, without these conditions, nothing can ever arise or enter into existence.

According to Buddhism, everything mental and physical happens in accordance with laws and conditions, and, if it were otherwise, chaos and blind chance would reign. But such a thing is impossible and contradicts all laws of nature.

Proposition 11: Rebirth Conditions Decay and Death

We have now reached the eleventh and last proposition: Rebirth conditions decay and death, likewise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. Thus arises once again the whole mass of suffering. Without birth, there cannot be decay and death. If we had not been born, we would not have to die and would not be exposed to all sorts of misery. Thus, rebirth is a necessary condition for decay and death and for all other forms of misery. Hence, it is said: "Rebirth conditions decay and death, likewise pain, grief, sorrow, lamentation, and despair. Thus arises once again the whole mass of suffering."

Deliverance

Herewith, the explanation of the eleven propositions of the *paṭicca-samuppāda* has been brought to a close. From the explanations given, it should now be clear that the twelve links of the formula are distributed over three successive lives — that they may be applied to our past, present, and future lives. The first two links (ignorance [*avijjā*] and *kamma*-formations [*saṁkhāra*]), represent the *kamma* causes in the past life; the next five links (consciousness, mind-and-body, the six sense faculties, contact [impression], and

feeling) represent the *kamma*-results in the present life; the following three links (craving [desire], clinging [attachment], and *kamma*-process [becoming]), represent the karmic causes in the present life; and the last two links (rebirth and decay and death) represent the *kamma*-results in the future life.

One ought to remember, moreover, that there are five full karmic causes, namely, ignorance (*avijjā*), *kamma*-formations (*saṁkhārā*), craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), and *kamma*-process, or becoming (*bhava*), and that, thus, we really get five causes in the past and five results in the present; five causes in the present and five results in the future. Therefore, it is said:

> *"Five causes were there in the past,*
> *Five fruits are found in the present life.*
> *Five causes which are now produced,*
> *Five fruits are reaped in future life."*

Now, if there had been no ignorance and no *kamma*-formations or life-affirming volitions in the past life, no consciousness and new life would have sprung up in the mother's womb, and our present birth would not have taken place. However, if, by deep penetration and deep insight into the ephemeral nature and the egolessness of all existence, one becomes fully detached from all forms of existence and freed from all ignorance, craving, and clinging to existence, freed from all those selfish *kamma*-formations or volitions, then, no further rebirth will follow, and the goal taught by the *Buddha* will have been realized, namely, deliverance from rebirth and suffering.

In closing, we may note that there are two versions of the doctrine of Dependent Origination in the scriptures — one dealing with the arising of suffering (discussed in this chapter), and the other dealing with the arising of liberation and freedom. ■

Further Reading

Nyanatiloka Mahāthera. 1969. *The Significance of Dependent Origination in Theravāda Buddhism*. Second impression 1982. (= The Wheel publication no. 140.) Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Nyanatiloka Mahāthera. 1994. "Paṭicca-Samuppāda: Dependent Origination," in: *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures*. (= The Wheel Publication no. 394/396.) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society), pp. 32—57.

31

The Perceptual Process in Detail[639]

Thus have I heard: At one time, the Lord was staying near Sāvatthī in the Jeta Grove at Anathāpiṇḍika's monastery. At that time, Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth was living by the seashore at Supparaka. He was respected, revered, honored, venerated, and given homage, and was one who obtained the requisites of robes, almsfood, lodging, and medicines.

Now, while he was in seclusion, this reflection arose in the mind of Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth: "Am I one of those in the world who are Arahants or who have entered the path to Arahatship?"

Then a deity who was a former blood-relation of Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth understood that reflection in his mind. Being compassionate and wishing to benefit him, he approached Bāhiya and said: "You, Bāhiya, are neither an Arahant nor have you entered the path to Arahantship. You do not follow that practice whereby you could be an Arahant or enter the path to Arahantship."

"Then, in the world, including the devas, who are Arahants or have entered the path to arahatship?"

"There is, Bāhiya, in a far country, a town called Sāvatthī. There, the Lord now lives who is the Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One. That Lord, Bāhiya, is indeed an Arahant, and He teaches Dhamma for the realization of Arahantship."

Then, Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth, profoundly stirred by the words of that deity, then and there departed from Supparaka. Stopping only for one night everywhere [along the way], he went to Sāvatthī, where the Lord was staying in the Jeta Grove at Anathāpiṇḍika's monastery. At that time, a number of Bhikkhus were walking up and down in the open air. Then, Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth approached those Bhikkhus and said: "Where, revered sirs, is the Lord now living, the Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One? I wish to see that Lord who is the Arahant, the Fully Enlightened One."

"The Lord, Bāhiya, has gone for almsfood among the houses."

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[639] This chapter is adapted from Appendix 1 of Cynthia Thatcher's book, *Just Seeing: Insight Meditation and Sense-Perception* (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [2008]), pp. 91—115.

Then, Bāhiya hurriedly left the Jeta Grove. Entering Sāvatthī, he saw the Lord walking for almsfood in Sāvatthī — pleasing, lovely to see, with calmed senses and tranquil mind, attained to perfect poise and calm, controlled, a perfected one, watchful, with restrained senses. On seeing the Lord, he approached, fell down with his head at the Lord's feet, and said: "Teach me Dhamma, Lord; teach me Dhamma, Sugata, so that it will be for my good and happiness for a long time."

Upon being spoken to thus, the Lord said to Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth: "It is an unsuitable time, Bāhiya. I have entered among the houses for almsfood."

A second time, Bāhiya said to the Lord: "It is difficult to know for certain, revered sir, how long the Lord will live or how long I will live. Teach me Dhamma, Lord; teach me Dhamma, Sugata, so that it will be for my good and happiness for a long time." A second time, the Lord said to Bāhiya: "It is an unsuitable time, Bāhiya. I have entered among the houses for almsfood."

A third time, Bāhiya said to the Lord: "It is difficult to know for certain ... Teach me Dhamma, Sugata, so that it will be for my good and happiness for a long time."

"Herein, Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: 'In the seen will be merely what is seen; in the heard will be merely what is heard; in the sensed will be merely what is sensed; in the cognized will be merely what is cognized.' In this way, you should train yourself, Bāhiya.

"When, Bāhiya, for you in the seen is merely what is seen ... in the cognized is merely what is cognized, then, Bāhiya, you will not be 'with that.' When, Bāhiya, you are not 'with that,' then, Bāhiya, you will not be 'in that.' When, Bāhiya, you are not 'in that,' then, Bāhiya, you will be neither here nor beyond nor between the two. Just this is the end of suffering."

Now, through this brief Dhamma teaching of the Lord, the mind of Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth was immediately freed from the taints without grasping. Then, the Lord, having instructed Bāhiya with this brief instruction, went away.

Not long after the Lord's departure, a cow with a young calf attacked Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth and killed him. When the Lord, having walked for almsfood in Sāvatthī, was returning from the alms round with a number of Bhikkhus, on departing from the town, he saw that Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth had died.

Seeing this, he said to the Bhikkhus: "Bhikkhus, take Bāhiya's body, put it on a litter, carry it away and burn it, and make a stūpa for it. Your companion in the Holy Life has died."

"Very well, revered sir," those Bhikkhus replied to the Lord.

Taking Bāhiya's body, they put it upon a litter, carried it away and burnt it, and made a stūpa for it. Then, they went to the Lord, prostrated themselves, and sat down to one side. Sitting there, those Bhikkhus said to the Lord: "Bāhiya's body has been burnt revered sir, and a stūpa has been made for it. What is his destiny, what is his future birth?"

"Bhikkhus, Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth was a wise man. He practiced according to Dhamma and did not trouble me by disputing about Dhamma. Bhikkhus, Bāhiya of the Bark-cloth has attained final nibbāna."

Then, on realizing its significance, the Lord uttered, on that occasion, this inspired utterance:

"Where neither water nor yet earth
Nor fire nor air gain a foothold,
There gleam no stars, no sun sheds light,
There shines no moon, yet there no darkness reigns.

"When a sage, a Brahmin, has come to know this
For himself through his own wisdom,
Then, he is freed from form and formless.
Freed from pleasure and from pain."

This inspired utterance was spoken by the Lord also, so I did hear.[640]

Introduction

In normal perception, it seems that, as soon as an object falls into our line of sight, we recognize it. Seeing and recognition appear to be simultaneous. And yet, the *Buddha's* teachings tell us that the apparent simultaneity is a perceptual trick, a speed-of-light sleight-of-hand.

Examining consciousness more closely, we find that it is not a seamless flow. Instead, it resembles a running movie. Although we perceive it as continuous, it is actually comprised of a series of discrete "frames," like a film. Each individual frame in the perceptual movie is called a "mind-moment" (*cittakkhaṇa*).[641] In the on-going show of perception, seeing always occurs several frames earlier than recognition.

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[640] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Udāna*, Bodhivagga, Bāhiya Sutta (adapted from the translation by John Ireland).

[641] *Citta*, meaning "consciousness," is pronounced like "cheetah" and runs even faster. Nothing in the universe, the *Buddha* said, can match the mind for speed. In regard to the continuity of a series of mind-moments, Mahāsī Sayādaw writes: "Any two consecutive units of consciousness are separate but, since they belong to the same stream of consciousness, we speak of the same individual for the whole day, the

Actually, a stream of consciousness is a series of thought processes.[642] A given thought process is made up of individual mind-moments.

For a normal act of visual perception to happen, several thought processes must occur. Under ordinary conditions, we cannot distinguish the separate processes, let alone the mind-moments that comprise them. This sequential act is perceived as a single event, as if the thought processes were telescoped in on themselves. But let us now stretch out the series of thought processes and examine the individual mind-moments.

When a visible form impinges on the sensitive matter of the eye — given the presence of attention and adequate light —, it sparks off a series of mind-moments. Here, a thought process does not occur *in* the mind but *is* the mind. There is no perceiver outside of it. As each mind-moment arises in the thought process, it constitutes, for that moment, the totality of mental phenomena.

Those mind-moments appear in a set order.[643] Moreover, only one mind-moment (*cittakkhaṇa*) can appear at a time. As soon as one *citta* appears, it falls away and triggers the next one in sequence until the thought process is complete.[644] We cannot preempt any of the mind-moments or alter their order. From this, we learn that we cannot control our own moments of consciousness, since it is impossible to leapfrog over any of the steps.

After the last mind-moment in a thought process passes, another thought process begins.[645] In one minute, thousands of thought processes flash past. It is due to this incredible speed, mimicking simultaneity, that we seem to think of many things at once, "from cabbages to kings." But, in truth, we can only know one object at a time. Other impulses wanting to push their way in must wait. That is to say that, while one thought process is taking place, other thought processes cannot occur.

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whole year or the whole lifetime." Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Dependent Origination* (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation [1999]), p. 29.

[642] In the original version of this chapter, Thatcher uses the analogy of a train to illustrate the perceptual process. However, as noted by Nārada Mahāthera, *The Buddha and His Teachings* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society [fourth edition 1988]), p. 462: "It must not be understood that consciousness is joined together in bits like a train or a chain. On the contrary, 'it constantly flows on like a river receiving from the tributary streams of sense contact accretions to its flood, and ever dispensing to the world around it the thought-stuff it has gathered along the way.' It has birth for its source and death for its mouth." Consequently, the train analogy has been removed from the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship version.

[643] When *cittas* arise cognizing an object at the sense doors or the mind door, they do not occur at random or in isolation, but as phases in a series of discrete cognitive events leading one to the other in a regular and uniform order. This order is called *cittaniyāma*, the fixed order of consciousness. For a cognitive process to occur, all the essential conditions must be present.

[644] Each mind-moment consists of three sub-moments — arising (*uppāda*), presence (*ṭhiti*), and dissolution (*bhanga*). Within the breadth of a mind-moment, a *citta* arises, performs its momentary function, and then dissolves, conditioning the next *citta* in immediate succession. Thus, through the sequence of mind-moments, the flow of consciousness continues uninterrupted like the waters in a stream.

[645] Between each thought process, several moments of subconsciousness, called *bhavanga* (literally, "life-continuum"), occur. *Bhavanga cittas* also occur in deep sleep.

The First Thought Process: The Eye-Door Process

First, let us look at the individual mind-moments that comprise what is termed an "eye-door process" (*cakkhudvāravīthi*). An eye-door process is a series of seventeen mind-moments that occurs whenever we see something. It is one type of sense-door process (the others are the ear-door, the nose-door, the tongue-door, and the body-door processes).

An eye-door process is the first thought process in an act of visual perception. It is normally followed by several more thought processes. Imagine, for the sake of illustration, that the object we are looking at is a pigeon.

THE PASSIVE PHASE: We do not perceive the pigeon immediately. During the first three mind-moments, the mind awakens from the *bhavanga* state and turns toward the color, the visible object. Thereafter, mind-moments four through eight perform the following functions, respectively: (4) adverting to the color; (5) seeing the color (the moment of eye consciousness [*cakkhuviññāṇa*]); (6) receiving the color; (7) investigating the color; and (8) determining the nature of the color.

This brings us roughly to the midpoint of the thought process, a pivotal point. The eighth mind-moment, determining consciousness (*votthapana-citta*), evaluates the object, deciding whether it is agreeable, disagreeable, or neither. (But the mind does not yet recognize the form in conventional terms.) Since the entire thought process has seventeen mind-moments, nine mind-moments have yet to occur. Note that neither liking nor disliking has arisen yet. The eight mind-moments that have appeared so far are ethically (karmically) neutral, neither wholesome nor unwholesome.[646] If mindfulness (*sati*) can intercept the process at the next mind-moment, then greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) cannot arise in the thought process. If mindfulness fails to appear, delusion arises. By then, it is too late for mindfulness to appear in the current thought process. It must wait for the next.

During meditation practice itself, however, most of us cannot know exactly when one thought process ends and another begins, or which mind-moment (*cittakkhaṇa*) is being experienced. The ordinary person cannot perceive the thought process with that degree of subtlety.[647] Nor is such precision necessary. During practice, we need only keep returning our attention to the object arising in the present moment, over and over again. A theoretical grasp of the process of consciousness is valuable for giving the practitioner more confidence in the method of insight meditation. But, one should not

[646] The eight mind-moments are either resultants (*vipāka*) or so-called inoperative *cittas*. Being neither wholesome (*kusala*) nor unwholesome (*akusala*), they cannot generate a *kamma* result (*kamma-vipāka*).

[647] However, according to Mahāsī Sayādaw, when "Just Seeing," an experienced meditator is able to distinguish individual thought processes as separate cognitive events. Individual mind-moments, however, cannot be noticed by most practitioners, although the process of enlightenment may be an exception. For the first time in a meditator's experience, several levels of insight (levels thirteen through fifteen) occur within a single thought process, in fractions of a second. Each knowledge (*ñāṇa*) lasts only as long as one, two, or three mind-moments, and the meditator may subsequently remember each insight distinctly.

think that, in practice, each mind-moment can be identified with the degree of precision being explained here.

To return to the thought process: As we said, if mindfulness is able to intercept a cognitive process (*cittavīthi*) before delusion arises, desire and hatred will be prevented from appearing at the same time, and, in that case, the entire thought process, not only that individual mind-moment, will be free of those factors.

Why is it so important to forestall delusion? Ignorance (*avijjā*), or delusion (*moha*), is the fundamental cause of unhappiness. (Although the terms "ignorance" and "delusion" overlap, as Achan Sobin explains, ignorance pertains to mental states in the past, while delusion pertains to the present moment when consciousness receives an object.) Whenever delusion is present, some degree of attachment and wrong view are too — and so is suffering.

Delusion triggers craving and aversion by causing us to misperceive the objects appearing at the sense doors. Because ignorance conceals their true nature, we regard phenomena that are completely unstable as permanent entities. Blind to the worthlessness of formations, we habitually grasp at them, generating fresh *kamma* that leads to renewed birth. With birth (*jāti*) comes suffering (*dukkha*) and death (*maraṇa*) (the cessation of birth is not death or nothingness, but *nibbāna*). Thus, we perpetuate the cycle of suffering (*saṁsāra*). The solution is to erase delusion, which, in turn, dispels craving (*taṇhā*) and grasping (*upādāna*). When craving is dispelled, suffering cannot arise.

We used the words "*kamma*" and "karmically."[648] Let us consider for a moment the meaning of *kamma*, since it comes into play during the next step in the perceptual thought process. The Buddhist definition of *kamma* is quite different from its popular sense in English as "fate" or as a kind of "cosmic payback" for some past act. The notion of fate has no place in Buddhist thought. *Kamma*, in Buddhism, means volitional action, whether mental, verbal, or physical.

Volitional action (*cetanā*) is a causative force (*hetu*[649]) producing a result. The results of such action are called "*vipāka*." *Kamma*-result (*kamma-vipāka*) takes the form of sensation: pleasant and unpleasant sights, sounds, tastes, touches, smells, and mental objects — in other words, our daily sensory experience.[650]

Therefore, what in popular parlance is referred to as *kamma*, that is, good or bad events that seemingly befall us without reason, would be called a "*kamma*-result" in

[648] The Sanskrit form of *kamma* is *karma*. It is the Sanskrit form that has made its way into English. Hence, when used as an adjective or adverb, it is the Sanskrit form that is used in this book, thus: "karmic" and "karmically." Inasmuch as they are treated as full-fledged English words, they are not italicized. When used as a Theravādin Buddhist technical term, however, it is the Pāḷi form that is used: *kamma*.

[649] *Hetu*, "cause," and *paccaya*, "condition," are two important concepts. They often occur together in the *suttas*. In the *Abhidhamma*, however, *hetu* denotes wholesome or unwholesome roots (*mūla*). In the sense "root condition" (*hetu-paccaya*), it is the first of the twenty-four conditions specified in the *Paṭṭhāna*.

[650] Strictly speaking, it is the *vipāka-citta* (resultant mind-moment) that is the result of *kamma*, not the sense object itself. But a *vipāka-citta* must know — that is, experience — some object.

Buddhism. Moreover, these good and ill events result from our own past actions, not from fate or any external power.[651]

Furthermore, *kamma*, in Buddhism, does not apply only to momentous actions — egregious violations of the moral code such as killing or stealing, or, on the wholesome side, heroic acts like saving a life. According to the *Buddha's* teachings, we generate good and bad *kamma* all the time in the most trivial daily actions and thoughts. Because *kamma* is generated in the mind, it does not require an outward expression to count.

Since thoughts accompanied by intention are *kamma*, they yield a result. But there are different degrees of *kamma*, producing weak or strong effects. The result of a single thought may be imperceptible, while the result of an act such as killing is usually very great. (That said, what makes an action karmically weighty is the strength of the intention. A man who accidentally takes a life does not reap the painful result of a man who kills intentionally.) Still, the *kamma* generated solely by thoughts cannot be discounted, for reasons we will discuss below. Now, let us return to our discussion of the perceptual process, which we left at the point of determining consciousness.

THE ACTIVE PHASE: The perceptual process up to this point has been essentially passive. The first eight mind-moments are karmically neutral, meaning that a person does not generate new *kamma* but only apprehends, in various ways, the form being presented.

After the determining *citta* (mind-moment number eight) makes a decision about the color, it is succeeded by six or seven mind-moments called "impulsions" (*javana*).[652] The *javanas* constitute the active phase of perception.[653] From the meditator's viewpoint, they are the most important mind-moments in the thought process. The *javanas* are the moments during which new *kamma* is generated, both wholesome and unwholesome. During those moments, we respond to the form being perceived. The problem is that we often respond unskillfully, with craving or aversion. In feeling attracted or repelled by the sights and sounds appearing at the sense doors, and acting upon those desires, the mind generates unwholesome *kamma* that perpetuates *dukkha*, "unsatisfactoriness" or "suffering."

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[651] Buddhism denies the existence of a creator god or supreme being. Moreover, it regards the three major monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) as "impossible religions," false, evil, and harmful. Adherence to these religions is considered "wrong view" (*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*).

[652] For an object that makes a strong impression at the sense door, see Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 82.

[653] As explained in the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, "*Javana* pertains to the active side of *present* existence, and determines the passive side of *future* existence." C. A. F. Rhys-Davids, *Compendium of Philosophy: Being a Translation from the Original Pāḷi of the Abhidhammattha Sangaha* (London: Pāḷi Text Society [1910]), p. 248. A new translation of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* has recently been published: Bhikkhu Bodhi (General Editor), *Abhidhammatha Sangaha: A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Pāḷi Text, Translation, & Explanatory Guide* (Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions [2000 — first published by the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Śri Lanka, in 1993, reprinted in 1999]). For more information on the *javanas*, see Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 82—83.

Javanas occur during every complete stream of consciousness, whether that thought process is a perceptual act in which we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch something (a sense-door process), or a so-called "mind-door" (*manodvāra*) process, in which we know a mental object. For any given thought process, it is only during these six or seven mind-moments that new *kamma* is generated. It would be impossible, for instance, to make *kamma* at the moment of eye consciousness (mind-moment number five, *cakkhu-viññāṇa*).

Now, we can understand the phrase "Just Seeing" more precisely. In terms of the *Abhidhamma*, "Just Seeing" means to interrupt a perceptual process with mindfulness[654] at the first *javana*, thereby preventing unwholesome *kamma* from being generated in that thought process. "Just Hearing," "Just Smelling," etc. should be understood in the same way.

As the *Buddha* told Mālunkyāputta: "When you see, just see it." The translation by Bhikkhu Bodhi reads: "In the seen, there will merely be the seen." That is, there will merely be the visible object present, as opposed to the visible object plus the *kilesas*.[655] The Commentary states, just as eye consciousness itself is free of greed, hatred, and delusion, so should the following *javanas* be free of those factors. Therefore, "in the seen, there will merely be the seen" means to have *javanas* that are devoid of greed, hatred, and delusion.

To intercept each cognitive process with mindfulness before delusion, aversion, or craving arises is, according to Mahāsī Sayādaw, the essence of the Mālunkyāputta teaching — he writes:

> *When one sees, one must stop at the thought moment of determining and note all phenomena with mindfulness. It is the same as saying, "When you see, just see it."*[656]

The word "determining" needs some explanation. For any sense-door process, Mahāsī Sayādaw held that mindfulness appears at the moment of determining consciousness (mind-moment number eight). The view that mindfulness can appear so early in the thought process is somewhat unorthodox, although at least one contemporary *Abhi-*

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[654] *Vipassanā* mindfulness is meant here.

[655] *Kilesa* (Sanskrit *kleśa*), which may be translated as "defilements" or "mental impurities," are mind-defiling, unwholesome qualities. There are ten defilements, thus called because they are themselves defiled and because they defile the mental factors associated with them. They are: (1) greed (*lobha*); (2) hatred (*dosa*); (3) delusion (*moha*); (4) conceit (*māna*); (5) wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*); (6) skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*); (7) mental torpor (*thīna*); (8) restlessness (*uddhacca*); (9) shamelessness (*ahirika*); and (10) lack of moral dread or unconscientiousness (*anottappa*). The *kilesas* are explained in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* and enumerated in the *Vibhanga* of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. No classification of the *kilesas* is found in the *suttas*, though the term occurs quite often in them. See Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 103.

[656] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), pp. 16—17.

dhamma teacher shares it.[657] The prevailing opinion, however, is that mindfulness does not appear until the initial *javana* (mind-moment number nine), as was stated earlier.

In any case, mindfulness can occur *no later than* at the first *javana*. That is because all seven *javanas* are obliged to respond uniformly. The first one sets the pattern. As it likes, dislikes, or feels indifferent toward the object, so do the other six. As the first *javana* is tainted with delusion, craving, or hatred, so are the rest. But, if the first is charged with mindfulness, so will the others be, automatically.

Whenever mindfulness (*sati*) is lacking, delusion (*moha*) is present during the *javanas*, and the conditions for *dukkha* accumulate. On the other hand, observing an object with mindfulness turns the compass needle toward awakening (*bodhi*). When *sati* knows a sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch as it is, without the bias of delusion, craving, or aversion, the practitioner begins to generate the type of *kamma* that leads to the cessation of *kamma*, both wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*). Each series of *javanas* with mindfulness is another step on the path toward liberation (*vimokkha*).

By worldly standards, actions motivated by loving-kindness (*mettā*) and other positive factors are wholesome *kamma*, yielding a pleasant result, whereas actions accompanied by greed or hatred produce unpleasant results. But the good result yielded by wholesome *kamma* is temporary. In order to reach *nibbāna*, which is permanent, we must stop the process of generating mundane *kamma* entirely, including the wholesome kind. This requires a type of *kamma* that is "neither black nor white." As the Thai teacher Ajahn Chah said:

> *The aim of the Buddha's teaching is to practice to create a type of karma that is beyond happiness and suffering and that will bring peace.*[658]

Although many positive mental factors contribute toward liberation, it is mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom (*paññā*) that directly block delusion during the *javanas*. As the blade that cuts the round of *kamma*, *sati-paññā* is of highest importance.

Knowing that our behavior has consequences, most of us try to perform helpful actions rather than harmful ones. We are most concerned with bodily actions, gestures others can see. But what of the consequences of purely mental action? What of the innumerable flickers of liking and disliking generated every day that are normally ignored? Perhaps we do not even regard these thoughts and intentions as actions. But, whenever the distracted mind likes or dislikes an object, we have performed an action, regardless of whether or not the body moves. Because attention and clear comprehension are weak, however, we do not notice the yearning that seizes the mind.

It may be difficult to understand why those flickers of wanting should concern us. Darting under the threshold of normal awareness, they seem innocuous even to their

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[657] Achan Sobin Namto. In a conversation with Thatcher, he explained that, although mindfulness does not yet have the duty to stop delusion at the moment of determining consciousness, it is able to "adjust the object" at that *citta*.

[658] Ajahn Chah, *Everything Arises, Everything Passes Away* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [2005]), pp. 62—63.

owners. But *are* they harmless? In Buddhism, as we said, volition is the most primitive form of action, and, as such, it has results that boomerang back on us.

That is not to say that by wishing something harmful on another (or ourselves), we will incur it. To believe that would be superstitious. An anvil is not going to drop on our heads for hoping for a moment that someone whom we dislike were out of the way. We will not become indigent for thinking of stealing a shirt, or struck down with illness for wanting dessert. If those things did occur, it would not be due to a stray thought, but to a complex of innumerable conditions. The wise person takes a realistic view, granting his thoughts neither more nor less power than they warrant.

However, the occasional thought becomes habitual when repeated. Repeated thoughts shape traits of character, and those tendencies can determine the circumstances of our next rebirth. Habit is a force to be reckoned with.

The wisps of liking and disliking have another effect, namely, the mental smog accumulates in the mind as they go unnoticed over weeks, months, or years. The fact is, whenever mindfulness is absent, we continue to generate delusion, desire, or aversion during the *javanas* in each perceptual thought process. Each moment may be innocuous in itself, but, when generated millions of times daily, the cumulative effect is substantial. Unless mindfulness can check the situation, ignorance surrounds the mind in layers of distortion that block the light of *Dhamma*, preventing us from seeing the Four Noble Truths.

These Truths appear clearly at the first stage of enlightenment. It is these four Truths that must be realized in order to reach the end of suffering. So, it comes down to this: the way to be free of suffering is to prevent delusion from arising just long enough to glimpse the Four Noble Truths. How long is "long enough?" Only a few moments, if the supporting factors are there.

The slight drafts of preference that rustle the mind are not harmful in an ordinary moral sense. But they are unskillful, inasmuch as they are tinged with delusion. Each intentional action prompted by delusion is a karmic "seed." And the fruit? Continued existence in *saṁsara* — that is, more moments of *nāma-rūpa*, more *dukkha*.

Incidentally, someone might wonder: if each moment of consciousness arises and dies in an instant, how can *kamma*, or qualities like the perfections (*pāramitā* or *pāramī*), be accumulated? Each mind-moment is accompanied by mental factors (*cetasika*), which may include wholesome or unwholesome qualities. Like consciousness itself, the mental factors of the present moment are conditioned by those that arose previously. Say, for instance, a bird flies one hundred miles to a protected spot, lays an egg, and dies just before the egg hatches. When the chick is born, it starts life from the new spot. It does not have to repeat the hundred-mile trip its mother took. Although the young bird is a different being from its mother, it is affected by the mother's past actions. Likewise, each new mind-moment is influenced by the previous ones. In that manner, wholesome or unwholesome tendencies are strengthened. The memory of the past actions is retained in the mental factor perception (*saññā*). *Saññā* arises and dies from moment to moment, too, but each fresh arising contains the memory of the mental continuum up to that point.

To return now to our stream of consciousness, which we left at the point of the *javanas* (the *javanas*, "impulsions," remember, are those mind-moments during which new *kamma* is generated): after the seven *javanas* pass, two mind-moments called "registration" (*tadārammaṇa-citta*) occur. That completes the eye-door process. To summarize what has happened so far: contact between the eye and a visible form triggered a stream of consciousness called an "eye-door process," made up of seventeen mind-moments (*cittakkhaṇa*). The first portion of the process consisted of eight karmically passive mind-moments; the next, of seven karmically active *javanas*; and the last, of two registrations, both karmically passive.

Karmically passive	1. First *bhavanga* 2. Second *bhavanga* 3. Third *bhavanga* 4. Adverting to the sense door 5. Seeing the object 6. Receiving the object 7. Investigating the object 8. Determining the nature of the object
Karmically active	9. First *javana* 10. Second *javana* 11. Third *javana* 12. Fourth *javana* 13. Fifth *javana* 14. Sixth *javana* 15. Seventh *javana*
Karmically passive	16. First registration 17. Second registration

During the eye-door process, consciousness only sees the visible form. It does not recognize it. Although seventeen mind-moments have passed and we have come to the end of the first thought process, we have yet to reach the point of perceiving the object. To do so will require several more thought processes. (Remember, we are stretching into slow motion an experience that lasts only a micro-second. In real-time, thousands of thought processes would pass in a flash.)

The Second Thought Process: The Conformational Mind-Door Process

After the eye-door process (*cakkhudvāravīthi*) ends, a new thought process begins called a "mind-door" process (*manodvāravīthi*). It is called "conformational" (*tadanu-vattikā*) because it conforms to the previous sense-door process. The color that was seen

in the eye-door process is already gone by the time the mind-door (*manodvāra*) process begins. But perception (*saññā*) "photocopies" the form, and that copy becomes the new object. It approaches the door of the mind, triggering the new thought process.

Although this thought process has fewer mind-moments (*cittakkhaṇa*) than the first one, the process is essentially the same. Consciousness "wakes up" and turns toward the object. Thereafter, a series of *javanas* ("impulsions") arises, generating wholesome or unwholesome *kamma*; lastly, registration (*tadārammaṇa*) occurs. In the mere act of glimpsing a pigeon, to return to our example, dozens of mind-moments have already rolled by — and the process is not over yet.

Even if mindfulness (*sati*) missed an opportunity in the previous thought process, there is still a chance for "Just Seeing" to occur here, at the first mind-door process. That is because the mind has not yet altered the form with conceptual knowledge. The object is still an ultimate reality, not a concept. As Mahāsī Sayādaw states:

> *When eye-consciousness has done the job [that is, when the eye-door process has finished], mind-consciousness takes over, but it is still unable to distinguish the visible object as [for example] male or female.*[659] *At this stage knowledge is still at the stage of ultimate realities (paramattha), as with the preceding eye-consciousness.*[660]

Although the visual form itself has passed away, the copy cognized during the first mind-door process is a faithful reproduction. Mahāsī Sayādaw writes:

> *If you fail to note the process of seeing just as it occurs [in the eye-door process], try to catch the first thought moment of mind consciousness. One who can seize that moment and notice the absolute reality of form, may notice the dissolution of both the sense-object and the eye-consciousness at the moment of seeing.*[661] [662]

The same applies to hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. As for hearing:

> *Note with mindfulness the instant that you hear. (Note as soon as the process of ear-consciousness occurs or, failing that, note as soon as the process of mind-consciousness [that is, the first mind-door process] occurs.)*[663]

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[659] The phrase "male or female" is shorthand for any conventional concept. "Pigeon" can be substituted here to conform with our example.

[660] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), p. 14.

[661] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), p. 29.

[662] The first thought moment of mind consciousness presumably refers to the first *javana*. Again, in truth, seizing the right moment cannot be done by mere intention, but occurs automatically when mindfulness is strong.

[663] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), p. 33.

To further refine our definition: "Just Seeing" (or "Just Hearing," etc.) means to intercept a perceptual process with mindfulness either (1) during the sense-door process itself or (2) at the first mind-door process. In either case, mindfulness must appear at the first *javana* — no later.

But rarely are we mindful enough to seize the moment even at the first mind-door process. Consider a rock tossed into a pond: long after it has sunk out of sight, the water ripples outward, continuing to register the impact. Likewise (unless mindfulness stops it here), the influence of an object impacting a sense door does not stop after one series of mind-moments. Even after the object has dropped away, waves of influence reverberate through the mind, triggering many thought processes (out of sight — *not* out of mind).

Thought Processes Three through Eight: Recognizing the Object

Lacking mindfulness to stop the momentum, many thought processes may be triggered by the original eye contact. That brings us to the third thought process — the second mind-door process (*manodvāravīthi*). At this point, recognition begins to occur, in stages. Now the object of consciousness is no longer a visible form or its copy, but a concept (*paññatti*[664]).

During this process, the mind "grasps the object as a whole." It synthesizes into a unity the separate mind-moments perceived in the two previous thought processes. It is like turning on a fan; the blades that were clearly separate when the fan was motionless now appear to run together. As Mahāsī Sayādaw explains:

> *Failure to note the object with mindfulness as it enters the mind door at the first moment of mind-consciousness prompts the arising of the second thought process. At this stage conceptual knowledge (paññatti) regarding the shape or form of the visible object begins to emerge, and it becomes firmly established at the third thought process. The subject is now able to distinguish the visible object as [for example] male or female. This clear cognition relates to both form and name, so concepts of name and form are conceived.*[665]

If mindfulness fails to seize the moment before reaching the second mind-door process, there is a good chance, due to the concealing effect of ignorance (*avijjā*), that the real characteristics of the object will be distorted. Continuing from above, we read:

> *This concept comes naturally in rapid succession during the second and third thought [mind-door] process, but it is a concept gained through ignorance (avijjā), which conceals the true nature of the object. The commentaries say ignorance has the tendency to hide. The basic exercise in mindfulness exhorts a*

[664] Also spelled *paṇṇatti*.

[665] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), p. 15.

meditator to observe and note every time he or she comes face to face with the [ultimate] realities, before ignorance creates the concept.[666] [667]

What is the "true nature" that ignorance conceals? The three characteristics of existence (*tilakkhaṇa*): (1) impermanence (*anicca*); (2) suffering, or unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*); and (3) impersonality, or non-self (*anattā*). The purpose of insight meditation (*vipassanā bhāvāna*) is to purify the mind of delusion and other unwholesome mental factors. These impurities, Mahāsī Sayādaw explains, only gain real strength beginning with the second and third mind-door processes. Hence, the importance of stopping short with mindfulness before that point.[668]

Even after completing the second mind-door process, one still has not fully identified the form in conventional terms. At least five more thought processes must be set rolling in order to recognize the object (the pigeon in our example).[669]

The functions of the next five thought processes are: (1) recognizing the color; (2) grasping the entity; (3) recognizing the entity; (4) grasping the name; and, finally, (5) recognizing the name.

"Just Seeing" Possible	}	1. Sense-door process (17) 2. Conformational mind-door process (12)
Conceptual Knowledge	}	3. Second mind-door process (grasping the object) (12) 4. Third mind-door process (recognizing the color) (12) 5. Fourth mind-door process (grasping the entity) (12) 6. Fifth mind-door process (recognizing the entity) (12) 7. Sixth mind-door process (grasping the name) (12) 8. Seventh mind-door process (recognizing the name) (12)

The numbers on the right represent the individual mind-moments in each thought process. Adding them together, we find that over 100 moments of consciousness may be involved in an ordinary perceptual act.

In summary, seven or eight thought processes must wend their way through the mind, and it is only then, when the last one has finished, that the object (the pigeon) is perceived. Yet, in arriving at the object's name, we have moved away from the original

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[666] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), p. 15.

[667] This does not apply to *Arahants*, since they have eliminated delusion. The other Noble Ones (Stream-Winners, Once-Returners, and Non-Returners), as well as experienced meditators, can also know a concept without delusion, although not invariably.

[668] See Mahāsī Sayādaw, *The Great Discourse on Not Self* (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation [1996]), pp. 74—75.

[669] According to Ledi Sayādaw. See Bhikkhu Bodhi (General Editor), *Abhidhammatha Sangaha: A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Pāḷi Text, Translation, & Explanatory Guide* (Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions [2000]), p. 164.

experience. Paradoxically, the more thought processes that pass — the longer we think about the object —, the farther we travel from the pure color as seen in the eye process.

Whenever a fresh series of unwholesome *javanas* goes over the same object, even if we are only *remembering* that object, more desire, hatred, or delusion is stirred up. We may find that we recall some words or images again and again until they stick in the mind. Mahāsī Sayādaw writes:

> *When you fail to stop short at seeing, hearing, etc., your mind will cling to those passions, and whenever you recall those sense-objects they will again arouse lust, anger, and delusion.*

On the other hand:

> *When we note the phenomena of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking as each of them occurs, we will realize their true nature, and with this realization we can exterminate craving together with its supporter, delusion.*[670]

Every time we see something, the same process of seventeen mind-moments (*cittakkhaṇa*) occurs. Millions of thought processes are triggered by sights and other sensations every day. The only way to prevent delusion from being generated in those thought processes is with mindfulness. But, again, it is only during the latter half of a perceptual thought process that mental impurities can be activated and strengthened. The mere act of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching generates no *kamma*.

Whether we are looking at a shape called "cockscomb" or "cocktail," the moment of seeing,[671] always occurs with the same kind of consciousness, the *citta* called "eye consciousness" (*cakkhuviññāṇa*). Furthermore, the thing seen is always the same kind of phenomenon: color (*rūpayatana*). The eye cannot see sound, taste, or smell. Hearing consciousness and smelling consciousness require other objects in order to arise.

The eye's aperture cannot admit such things as pigeons, airplanes, or eagles. Because the eye door can accept only one kind of data, the different details of visual forms — their distinguishing shapes and patterns — are, ultimately speaking, irrelevant. From the absolute point of view, the characteristics of one color patch are identical to those of any other, the only difference being that they occur in different moments.

The unit of consciousness (*citta*) that sees a particular image has no function other than to see at that moment. Instantly, it dies. It does not persist to hear a sound, feel a touch, etc. It cannot even form the thought that it is seeing an image. That thought, if it occurs, is carried out by subsequent *cittas*, each of which is also highly specialized and inconceivably brief. Nowhere in this process can we find an enduring higher or superior

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[670] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *Bhara Sutta* (Rangoon: Buddha Sāsana Anuggaha Organization [1980]). Available at: http://www.dhammaweb.net/mahasi/book/Mahasi_Sayadaw_Bhara_Sutta.pdf.

[671] "Moment of seeing" refers to the actual *citta* of eye consciousness here (mind-moment number five), not the entire eye-door process.

consciousness aware of broader chunks of experience across time. As Mahāsī Sayādaw remarks:

> *[Most people believe that] it is the same 'I' who sees as that which hears and touches ... But the meditator who is watchful of these phenomena knows that ... every act of seeing, hearing, touching, and knowing is a new arising.*[672]

We should now realize that perceiving a pigeon is not the same as seeing a visible form. Seeing a visual form happens during an eye-door process, whereas knowing a pigeon is a conceptual construct that is the result of several mind-door processes that have occurred after the act of seeing.

Visual perception is only one kind of sense-door process. Every time a sound, smell, taste, or touch brushes against its respective sense door (ear, nose, tongue, or body), it sets off a protocol like the one described above for visual perception. The only difference is that, in place of the eye consciousness, we would have a moment of hearing consciousness, smelling consciousness, tasting consciousness, or body consciousness, as the case might be. And, whenever we know a mental object, the stream of consciousness must follow the order for a mind-door process.[673]

After we recognize the pigeon, the perceptual process starts over. The mind becomes aware of a new object — a new sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch — arising at one of the sense doors. The process is so quick that, in one second, we can recognize hundreds of sense impressions.

In summary, in regard to one act of perception, "Just Seeing," "Just Hearing," "Just Smelling," "Just Tasting," or "Just Touching" can occur during the actual sense-door process or the conformational mind-door process, but not during a subsequent mind-door process.

The recognition phase of perception, in which we identify the object by its conventional name, can also be defined more precisely now. Recognition happens in stages, beginning with the second mind-door process (the third thought process). It consists of any thought processes subsequent to the first mind-door process. It is during these thought processes that conceptual knowledge (*paññatti*) develops.

♦♦♦

As we may recall, part of the instruction to Bāhiya and Mālunkyaputta was, "When thinking, just think." But is a thought not already conceptual? What does it mean to "Just Think?"

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[672] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *The Great Discourse on Not Self* (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation [1996]), p. 123.

[673] However, in the cognitive series that occurs during enlightenment, the path moment is immediately followed by a fruition consciousness (its resultant) in the same series of *cittas*. In this case, the seven *javana cittas* are not functionally identical as they would be in a mundane process of consciousness.

The essence of the instructions to Bāhiya and Mālunkyaputta is to note, with mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*), every object as soon as it comes into contact with consciousness — at the earliest point of entry through one of the sense doors. By so doing, we prevent the mind from clinging to sense impressions. Up to now, when speaking of concepts, we have chiefly been referring to concepts that arise subsequent to a sense-door process — that is, to those ideas that are a direct consequence of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, or tasting something in the present (as when we see a shape in front of us and recognize it as a cup, for instance).

But the mind itself is the sixth perceptual door. Some objects enter the mind door directly, without passing through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, or body first. When a conceptual object enters the mind door in an independent process, we have a different situation than when it enters subsequent to a sense-door process.[674]

Even in its most primitive form, a thought that arises spontaneously at the mind door is already a conceptual object. What should we do? Ignore it or observe it? First, it should be understood that this type of concept may be triggered by different conditions than a thought based upon a sense-door process. The latter type of thought — it may be called a "sense concept" — must be fashioned over the course of many thought processes, as we saw in the example of the pigeon. It is the end-stage of a string of processes occurring in the (relative) present.

Although the pigeon is conceptual, the original object of perception (the object that initiated the series of thought processes) was not a concept but a visual form (*rūpāyatana*).[675] Seven or eight thought processes had to pass from the time that the color entered the eye door until a pigeon was perceived. The object in the first thought process was a *rūpa*. The object in the last thought process was a concept (*paññatti*). At some point in the middle, the object was, figuratively speaking, "switched" (the switch occurred at the third thought process).[676]

In a kind of existential shell game run by ignorance, we start with an ultimate reality and end with a conceptual one. In failing to notice the *rūpa* that initiates the process, we assume that the concept has been there from the outset. In our example, we take the pigeon to be the original object. Knowing only the conceptual pigeon, we

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[674] The mind door is the *bhavanga*, "life continuum." "An independent mind-door process occurs when any of the six objects enters the range of cognition entirely on its own, not as a consequence of an immediately-preceding sense-door process." Bhikkhu Bodhi (General Editor), *Abhidhammatha Sangaha: A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Pāḷi Text, Translation, & Explanatory Guide* (Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions [2000]), p. 164. The John Ireland translation of the *Bāhiya Sutta* reads, "In the cognized will be merely what is cognized." The phrase "in the cognized," the Commentary explains, refers to the adverting *citta* of the mind-door process. An independent mind-door process is probably meant. As we know, the Bāhiya instruction moves from seeing to hearing, etc. Since hearing entails a new sense-door process, not a continuation of the previous eye process, it is likely "in the cognized" also applies to the initial process of a new cognitive series, rather than to a subsequent process.

[675] The visible form is described in the *Vibhanga* as "that phenomenon that is built up of the four physical elements and appears as color, etc." What is seen by visual perception, that is, eye consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*), are colors and differences of light, but not three-dimensional material things.

[676] The *rūpa*, in fact, disintegrates at the end of the sense-door process.

remain ignorant of the *rūpa* that triggered the series of thought processes.[677] (Most experienced meditators, however, will realize that the concept was not the original object.)

During any perceptual event, there are two chances for mindfulness to intervene and note the bare sense datum at the sense-door process and the first mind-door process. But, if someone is only aware of a pigeon, although he or she may have had mindfulness, such mindfulness was not strong enough to stop short at either point. It only caught the tail-end of the perceptual event, by which time the *rūpa* had already been replaced by the concept.

A thought or concept that enters the mind door spontaneously, on the other hand, may arise due to a number of reasons, these having little or nothing to do with the strength of mindfulness. Some of the factors that can trigger an independent mind-door process include: "the power of kamma, disturbance of the bodily humors, the influence of a deity, comprehension, realization," and so on.[678] No matter how mindful we are, it is not possible, for instance, to prevent a thought from arising if it is due to the power of *kamma*. Here, there is no possibility of mindfulness intercepting the mental current before the concept is formed, since the original object is already conceptual. The thought should be accepted as non-self — something over which we have no control —, noted, and immediately let go of.

The advice against conceptualizing is intended to prevent us from superimposing concepts onto the original object. But, when the original object is a concept to begin with, we need only note it as soon as it appears and cease to think about it further. As long as we do not conceptualize the concept, we are still following the instructions the *Buddha* gave to Bāhiya and Mālunkyaputta. Mahāsī Sayādaw writes:

> *With the range of mental objects too, you will just stop short at the point where mind-consciousness arises without formulating concepts.*[679]

But, during meditation, we should not try to figure out whether a given thought resulted from a lapse in mindfulness or arose spontaneously at the mind door. In either case, the method is the same: we should note the thought as soon as we become aware of it, just as we would note any other object, without adding *more* thinking. That is, we should note the thought as soon as it appears and then immediately let go of it. As Mahāsī Sayādaw explains:

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[677] On the way in which "consciousness plays conjuring tricks," see Mahāsī Sayādaw, *The Great Discourse on Not Self* (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation [1996]), p. 77.

[678] Bhikkhu Bodhi (General Editor), *Abhidhammatha Sangaha: A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Pāḷi Text, Translation, & Explanatory Guide* (Seattle, WA: BPS Pariyatti Editions [2000]), p. 164, citing Ledi Sayādaw.

[679] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), pp. 21—22.

> *Any idea must be noted as soon as it is formed so that the inclination to defilements has no opportunity to arise. When the defilements cease, kamma and results also cease.*[680]

As mentioned above, it is not only the object that arises and passes away, but the knowing consciousness itself. The experienced meditator, observing the act of thinking, does not get engrossed in the content of thought. When a thought appears, he automatically focuses on the *knowing*. By refraining from getting involved in the content, whether pleasant or unpleasant, intelligent or stupid, he sees the impermanence of each moment of consciousness.

What the meditator experiences is the pure sensation of thinking, which is nothing more than a mental movement. Mahāsī Sayādaw writes:

> *As he or she notes it like this, no attachment arises. In other words, mindfulness dispels lust or passion. In such circumstances consciousness just occurs, it does not go beyond that. This is in accordance with the instruction ... "when you know, just know it."*[681]

♦♦♦

Let us take another look at the phrase "stopping short," or, as Mahāsī Sayādaw sometimes calls it, "stopping the mind." The Bāhiya formula, according to Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda, "consists in *stopping short* at the level of sense data without being led astray by them."[682] (Italics in the original.) As should be clear by now, when we stop at the bare sense datum, the mind cannot drum up craving or aversion to lead us into suffering.

"Stopping the mind" does not mean consciousness literally ceases. For example, let us imagine stopping a stream of water shooting from a hose with our hand. Invisible pressures still force the water out of the hose, but it does not travel far. Although it spurts out here and there between our fingers as it hits our palm, the water cannot shoot out in an eight-foot arc to the edge of the yard. It stays right here in our hand. In the same way, although the pressure of past *kamma* causes mind-moments (*cittas*) to issue forth, when mindfulness (*sati*) interrupts the momentum of craving, consciousness stays right here in the present. Mind-moments continue to form just the same, but they do not run out in a long stream extending from the past into the future.

When an object enters one of the sense doors, it begins what could be called a "cognitive thread," a consecutive series of thought processes triggered by that sense

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[680] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), p. 57.
[681] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), p. 57.
[682] Bhikkhu Ñāṇananda, *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society [1971]), p. 31.

impression.[683] In order to know a pigeon, we saw, eight thought processes were needed. If we may be excused an awkward shift in metaphor: those eight thought processes together constitute one cognitive thread. (Earlier, we strung mind-moments together to make a stream of consciousness. Now, we will string thought processes together to make a thread.)

But the mind does not stop after eight thought processes. Unlike a single stream of consciousness, a thread has no determinate length.[684] In daily life, eighty or eight hundred thought processes may be triggered in a sequence by a single sense datum. In the absence of strong mindfulness, delusion and desire might keep adding to a thread until a more compelling object commanded attention. Yet, as soon as mindfulness intervenes, that cognitive thread ends. There are other conditions that might trigger the start of a new cognitive thread. Yet, one thing unique about mindfulness is its power to break the force of delusion and craving that compels the ordinary mind to dwell on certain thoughts obsessively, even when they generate suffering.

Mahāsī Sayādaw remarks:

> *Since sense objects fail to generate defilements in the meditator, there is no reason for the meditator to recall them [the object], and so defilements are discarded.*[685]

In essence, "stopping short" and "letting go" are the same.

But what happens to consciousness after it stops short? What does it know? There is always another object to be received at one of the sense doors. The mind starts over with a new sight, sound, smell, taste, or touch. Another thread begins. With *sati* in charge, the mind turns to the next phenomenon lightly, free of the hidden agendas of desire, with no sense of looking for something better or trying to grasp the new form. The mind simply receives the next sensation.

For any cognitive thread, if mindfulness can interrupt the flow of consciousness at the first mind-door process, according to Mahāsī Sayādaw, the second mind-door process need not occur. The thread ends there. When the mind stays in the immediate present

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[683] C. A. F. Rhys Davids (*Compendium of Philosophy: Being a Translation from the Original Pāḷi of the Abhidhammattha Sangaha* [London: Pāḷi Text Society (1910)], p. 34), refers to "complex groups of processes." There is a causal relation that obtains among certain groups of consecutive thought processes, and, in order to speak of them conveniently, Thatcher has coined the term "thread," which refers to an initial sense-door process (or an independent mind-door process) plus its consequent processes. Only consecutive processes are meant. If the mind returns to an object *x* after an intervening sense-door process that cognized *y*, the new *cittas* regarding *x* would not be counted as part of the original thread. Within one thread, there are still *bhavanga cittas* between each thought process.

[684] While the Commentary states that roughly seven consequent processes must occur in order to recognize a sense datum, it seems that there is, in theory, no upper limit for the number of such processes. As Rhys Davids explains, in an actual case of perception, each stage of conceptualization may be repeated many times. C. A. F. Rhys Davids, *Compendium of Philosophy: Being a Translation from the Original Pāḷi of the Abhidhammattha Sangaha* (London: Pāḷi Text Society [1910]), p. 32.

[685] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), p. 23.

with bare attention, it will not go beyond the first mind-door process. This is stated repeatedly in the Mālunkyaputta discourse, as in the following passage on hearing:

> *The process of mind-consciousness [that is, the first mind-door process] is only aware of the sound, and concept has not yet been formed. If you can note this with mindfulness, apperception ends here.*[686]

Although the term "stopping short" can be used in a more general sense, in Mahāsī Sayādaw's commentary on the Mālunkyaputta Sutta, it means to begin a new thread after the first mind-door process has passed (or after the sense-door process, in which case the entire thread would only be one thought process long). On this definition, the pattern of thought processes when "Just Seeing" would look something like this:

Diagram 1

1. *SD*	2. CMD	3. *SD*	4. CMD
[*rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr*]	[rrrrrrrrrrr]	[*rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr*]	[rrrrrrrrrrr]
5. *SD*	6. CMD	7. *SD*	8. CMD
[*rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr*]	[rrrrrrrrrrr]	[*rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr*]	[rrrrrrrrrrr]

Legend:
r = a *citta* that knows a *rūpa*
SD = a Sense-Door process
CMD = Conformational Mind-Door process
Italics indicate the beginning of a thread

[686] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), pp. 22—23. Even the first mind-door process, Mahāsī Sayādaw says, need not occur if *sati* can intercept the cognitive stream at the sense-door process. "When one sees, one must stop at the thought moment of determining and note all phenomena with mindfulness" (*A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* [Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation (2003)], pp. 16—17). Here, he must be referring to the sense-door process, since there is no determining *citta* in a mind-door process. See also Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), pp. 22 and 33, and *The Great Discourse on Not Self* (Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation [1996]), p. 78. Achan Sobin, in an interview with Thatcher, said: "It is absolutely possible for *sati* to stop short at the sense-door process." He explained, whereas a mind-door process would always follow a sense door one in ordinary perception, the case is different when *vipassanā-ñāṇa* is strong. However, these are minor philosophic points, and the ultimate aim of studying *Abhidhamma* is to experience realities directly. At times, the knowledge gained through meditation may not correspond to a particular theoretical detail we have learned. As. Dr. N. K. G. Mendis said, "What is important is the essence; it is this that we should try to experience for ourselves."

Here, four separate threads occur within eight thought processes. Whenever *sati* stops short, a new thread begins. Compare this to a series in which a sense concept is known. In the latter case, all eight thought processes belong to one thread.[687]

Diagram 2

1. *SD*	2. CMD	3. MD	4. MD
[*rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr*]	[rrrrrrrrrrr]	[ccccccccccc]	[ccccccccccc]
5. MD	6. MD	7. MD	8. MD
[ccccccccccc]	[ccccccccccc]	[ccccccccccc]	[ccccccccccc]

Legend:
r = a *citta* that knows a *rūpa*
c = a *citta* that knows a concept
SD = a Sense-Door process
CMD = Conformational Mind-Door process
MD = consequent Mind-Door process
Italics indicate the beginning of a thread

Not all (or even most) conceptualizing is motivated by unwholesome mental factors, of course. As we know, conceptual thought is necessary for ordinary tasks like repairing a road, cooking a meal, writing a letter, and so on. If the obligations to work and family are done with right understanding, the thoughts involved will be wholesome.

Even an *Arahant* (fully-enlightened being) might think conceptually for a long time, as when he is giving a *Dhamma* talk. But, in contrast to the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*), his mind would be under no *compulsion* from the defilements (*kilesa*) to do so (nor would he misunderstand the concepts he was experiencing). The obsessive power of craving that can force the ordinary mind to spin a thread out longer and longer is entirely lacking in an *Arahant*. The motivation to conceptualize might come instead from the mental factor wisdom (*paññā*) or compassion (*karuṇā*). A sight or sound does not impact the mind of a Holy One (an *Arahant*) such that a long series of thought processes *must* be generated about it.

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[687] According to C. A. F. Rhys-Davids (*Compendium of Philosophy: Being a Translation from the Original Pāḷi of the Abhidhammattha Sangaha* [London: Pāḷi Text Society (1910)]), in a real case of ordinary perception, the mind might repeat the sense-door process and its conformational mind-door process many times before moving on to the stage of conceptualizing the object. In the early part of this process, therefore, there might appear a series of thought processes like those shown in Diagram 1. Yet, this would differ from a case in which the mind, due to the influence of *sati-paññā*, experienced a consecutive series of different sense-door processes, each having a new object, with no interruption from conceptual thought.

♦♦♦

Experience is an ongoing barrage of colors, sounds, and other sensory stimuli bombarding the open sense doors. Lacking mindfulness of these phenomena, strands of liking and disliking are ever pulled into being like an endless string of handkerchiefs from a magician's pocket. These *javanas*, and the verbal and physical actions that spring from them, are new *kammas* that keep the wheel of suffering turning. But if *sati-paññā* (mindfulness and wisdom) can stop delusion, even for a few moments, the benefit is greater than any worldly gain.

Fortunately, the practice of observing the mind is as simple as the theory is complex. Reviewing the theory of consciousness, as we have done here, can help us understand the reasoning behind "Just Seeing." But, as we said earlier, at the moment of eyeing a patch of color, we cannot know — nor do we need to know — whether we are on mind-moment five, nine, or fourteen.[688]

In practice, we need only note an object the instant that we become aware of it. We then stop there, without describing it or judging it. We do not even have to give it a name. We immediately drop that phenomenon and go on to the next. Know and let go.

This procedure cuts off the mind's tendency to wander, since consciousness can only receive one object at a time. And, because the incoming flow of forms never stops, some new object will ever be rocketing toward us. We will never find, having dropped the last object, that we are hanging in space with nothing to observe.

The good news is that we need not cut off all unwholesome *javanas* ("impulsions") or stop them permanently. (Only *Arahants* have entirely ceased generating ethically weighty *javanas*, both wholesome and unwholesome.[689]) Beholding even one moment with wisdom as it arises and vanishes is a boon that will carry over to future lifetimes. And perceiving ultimate phenomena clearly for a few moments may be enough to realize enlightenment.

Although it is not easy to intercept the stream of consciousness with mindfulness and wisdom, it is certain that anyone who practices *vipassanā* to the end of the path will do so, calling a halt to the cycle of suffering. Although we may spend lifetimes preparing the ground for awakening, the actual experience, the Noble Ones say, occurs in a flash. Having entered the stream to *nibbāna*, there is no turning back. The endless cycle of future lives in *saṁsāra*, which formerly had no visible end, is cut off. One who enters the stream[690] can have no more than seven rebirths before attaining enlightenment (*bodhi*).

To summarize the process of seeing: Color is experienced through the eye door first. At that point, we do not see a being or a thing, we do not know whether the object is called a "pigeon" or an "airplane." Thereafter, a photocopy of the color is sent to the mind door. Over the course of several thought processes (all mind-door processes now),

[688] Although ordinary people cannot know this, it is said that the *Buddha* was able to, as were some of His Noble Disciples.

[689] When *Arahants* cognize an object, they still experience seven *javanas*; but those *cittas* are inoperative, neither wholesome nor unwholesome, and they do not produce *kamma*.

[690] A *Sotāpanna*, "Stream-Winner," or "Stream-Enterer," the first stage of Holiness, or Sainthood.

the mind evaluates, remembers, and recognizes the form, creating a conceptual entity. Every time an additional mind-door process recalls the object with liking or disliking, more *kamma* is generated. In order to reach *nibbāna*, one must cut off the process of generated *kamma*, both wholesome and unwholesome.

The *Buddha* said:

> *"When, Mālunkyāputta, regarding things seen, heard, sensed, and cognized by you, in the seen, there will merely be the seen; in the heard, there will merely be the heard; in the sensed, there will merely be the sensed; in the cognized, there will merely be the cognized, then, Mālunkyāputta, you will not be 'by that.' When, Mālunkyāputta, you are not 'by that,' then you will not be 'therein.' When, Mālunkyāputta, you are not 'therein,' then you will be neither here nor beyond nor between the two. This, itself, is the end of suffering."*[691]

As Mahāsī Sayādaw explains:

> *When a meditator lets go of craving and egoistic views, releasing himself from the ideas of "I," "Mine," or "My Self," he cannot get stuck in sense objects.*[692]

Understanding that there is no self behind the ongoing show of sense impressions, the meditator will cease to get involved in it through liking, disliking, and clinging.

By following the *Buddha's* instructions to Bāhiya and Mālunkyaputta, we, too, can attain liberation.

> *"Destroyed is birth, the Holy Life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being."*[693] ■

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[691] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, 35. Connected Discourses on the Six Sense Bases (*Saḷāyatanasaṁyutta*), Division II. The Second Fifty, V. The Sixes, Mālunkyaputta, no. 35:95.

[692] Mahāsī Sayādaw, *A Discourse on Mālukyaputta Sutta* (Middlesex: Association for Insight Meditation [2003]), p. 24.

[693] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Udāna*, Bodhivagga, Bāhiya Sutta; *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, 35. Connected Discourses on the Six Sense Bases (*Saḷāyatanasaṁyutta*), Division II. The Second Fifty, V. The Sixes, Mālunkyaputta, no. 35:95.

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32

Modes of Birth and Death

"Again, again, the ignorant seek rebirth;
Again, again, birth and dying come;
Again, again, men bear us to the grave."[694]

Causes of Death

Paṭicca-samuppāda describes the process of rebirth in subtle technical terms and assigns death to one of the following four causes:

1. Exhaustion of the Reproductive *kamma* (*kammakkhaya*).
2. The expiration of the life-term (*āyukkhaya*), which varies from plane to plane.
3. The simultaneous exhaustion of the Reproductive *kamma* energy and the expiration of the life-term (*ubhayakkhaya*).
4. The opposing action of a stronger *kamma* unexpectedly obstructing the flow of the Reproductive *kamma* before the life-term expires (*upacchedaka-kamma*).

Exhaustion of the Reproductive Kamma

The Buddhist belief is that, as a rule, the thought, volition, or desire that is extremely strong during one's lifetime becomes predominant at the time of death and conditions the subsequent birth. A special potentiality is present in this last thought-process. When the potential energy of this Reproductive *kamma* is exhausted, the organic activities of the material form in which the life-force is embodied cease even before the end of the life-span in that particular place. This often happens in the case of beings who are born in states of misery (*apāya*), but it can happen in other planes too.

The Expiration of the Life-Term

Natural deaths, due to old age, may be classed under this category.

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[694] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

There are different planes of existence, with varying age limits. Irrespective of the karmic force that has yet to run, one must, however, succumb to death when the maximum age limit is reached. If the Reproductive karmic force is extremely powerful, the karmic energy rematerializes itself in the same plane or, as in the case of *devas*, in some higher realm.

The Opposing Action of a Stronger Kamma Obstructing the Reproductive Kamma

Sudden, untimely deaths of persons and the deaths of children are due to this cause.

A more powerful opposing force can check the path of a flying arrow and bring it down to the ground. In like manner, a very powerful karmic force of the past is capable of nullifying the potential energy of the last thought-process and may thus destroy the psychic life of the being. The death of Venerable Devadatta, for instance, was due to the Destructive *kamma* which he committed during his lifetime.

Modes of Birth

The first three causes of death are collectively called "timely deaths" (*kāla-maraṇa*), and the fourth is known as "untimely death" (*akāla-maraṇa*). An oil lamp, for example, may get extinguished owing to any of the following four causes: (1) the exhaustion of the wick, (2) the exhaustion of oil, (3) simultaneous exhaustion of both wick and oil, or (4) some extraneous cause like a gust of wind. Likewise, death may be due to any of the foregoing four causes.

Explaining thus the causes of death, Buddhism states that there are four modes of birth:

1. Egg-born beings (*aṇḍaja*);
2. Womb-born beings (*jalābuja*);
3. Moisture-born beings (*saṁsedaja*);
4. Beings having spontaneous births (*opapātika*).

This broad classification embraces all living beings.

Birds and oviparous snakes belong to the first class.

The womb-born creatures comprise all human beings, some *devas* inhabiting the earth, and animals that take conception in a mother's womb.

Embryos, using moisture as a nidus for their growth, like certain lower forms of animal life, belong to the third class.

Beings having a spontaneous birth are generally invisible to the physical eye. Conditioned by their past *kamma*, they appear spontaneously, without passing through an embryonic state. *Petas* and *devas* normally, as well as *brahmās*, belong to this class. ■

33

Planes of Existence

"It is utterly impossible to reach the world's end by walking. But none escape from suffering unless the world's end has been reached."[695]

Spheres of Existence

According to Buddhism, the earth, an almost insignificant speck in the universe, is not the only habitable world, and humans are not the only living beings. The number of world systems and living beings are incalculable. Nor is the impregnated ovum the only route to rebirth. "It is utterly impossible to reach the world's end by walking," says the *Buddha*.

Births can take place in any one of a number of different spheres of existence. Altogether, there are thirty-one places in which beings can be reborn, based upon their wholesome or unwholesome *kamma*.

States of Unhappiness

There are four states of unhappiness (*apāya*[696]), which are viewed both as mental states and as places:

1. *Niraya*:[697] these are woeful states where beings atone for the evil deeds they have committed. They are not eternal hells where beings are subject to endless suffering. Upon the exhaustion of their evil *kamma*, there is a possibility for beings born in such states to be reborn in blissful states as the result of their past good *kamma*.

2. *Tiracchāna-yoni*:[698] this is the animal kingdom. Buddhist belief is that beings can be born as animals on account of evil *kamma*. There is, however, the possibility for animals to be born as human beings as a result of the good *kamma* accumulated in the

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[695] *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:46; *Saṁyutta Nikāya* 2:36.
[696] *Apa* + *aya* = "devoid of happiness."
[697] *Ni* + *aya* = "woeful."
[698] *Tiro* = "across," *acchāna* = "going."

past. Strictly speaking, it would be more correct to state that *kamma* that manifested itself in the form of a human being may manifest itself in the form of an animal, or the other way around, just as an electric current can be manifested in the forms of light, heat, and motion successively, one not necessarily being derived from the other.

It may be noted that, at times, certain animals, particularly dogs and cats, live a more comfortable life than some human beings due to their past good *kamma*.

It is one's *kamma* that determines the nature of one's material form, which varies according to the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of one's actions.

3. *Peta-yoni*:[699] this is the realm of departed beings, or those absolutely devoid of happiness. *Petas* are not disembodied spirits or ghosts. They possess deformed physical bodies of varying size and are generally invisible to the naked eye. They have no planes of their own but live in forests, dirty surroundings, etc. There is a special book, called *Petavatthu*, which deals exclusively with the stories of these unfortunate beings. The *Saṁyutta Nikāya* also relates some interesting accounts of these *petas*.

   Describing the pathetic state of a *peta*, Venerable Moggallāna states:

   > *"Just now, as I was descending Vultures' Peak Hill, I saw a skeleton going through the air, and vultures, crows, and falcons kept flying after it, pecking at its ribs, pulling it apart while it uttered cries of pain. Thereupon, this thought came to me, friend: 'O, but this is astonishing! O, but this is incredible, that a person will come to have such a shape, that the individuality acquired will come to have such a shape'."*

   "This being," the *Buddha* remarked, "was a cattle-butcher in the previous birth, and, as a result of his past *kamma*, he was born in such a state."

   According to the *Milindapañha*, there are four kinds of *petas*: (1) the *vantāsikas*, who feed on vomit; (2) the *khuppipāsino*, who hunger and thirst; (3) the *nijjhānamataṇhikā*, who are consumed by thirst; and (4) the *paradattūpajīvino*, who live on the gifts of others.

   As stated in the Tirokuḍḍa Sutta,[700] these last mentioned *petas* share the merit performed by their living relatives in their names and could, thereby, pass on to better states of happiness.

4. *Asura-yoni*: the plane of the *asura* beings. *Asura*, literally, means those who do not shine or those who do not frolic. These *asuras* are another class of unhappy beings similar to the *petas*. They should be distinguished from the *asuras* who are opposed to the *devas*.

[699] *Pa* + *ita* = "departed beings" (Sanskrit *preta*).
[700] *Khuddaka Pāṭha*.

States of Happiness

Next to these four unhappy states (*duggati*) are the seven happy states (*sugati*) — they are:

1. *Manussa*:[701] the realm of human beings. The human realm is a mixture of both pain and happiness. *Bodhisattas* prefer the human realm, since it is the best place to serve the world and perfect the requisites of Buddhahood. *Buddhas* are always born as human beings.

2. *Cātummahārājika*: the lowest of the heavenly realms, where the Guardian Deities of the four quarters of the firmament reside with their followers.

3. *Tāvatiṁsa*: literally, "thirty-three" — the Celestial Realm of the "thirty-three *devas*," where Deva Sakka is the King. The origin of the name is attributed to a story which states that thirty-three selfless volunteers led by Magha (another name for Sakka), having performed charitable deeds, were born in this heavenly realm. It was in this realm that the *Buddha* taught the *Abhidhamma* to the *devas* for three months.

4. *Yāma*: the Realm of the *yāma devas*. *Yāma* is that which destroys pain.

5. *Tusita*: literally, "happy dwellers" — this is the Realm of Delight. The *Bodhisattas* who have perfected the requisites of Buddhahood reside in this Plane until the opportune moment comes for them to appear in the human realm to attain Buddhahood. The Bodhisatta Metteyya,[702] the future *Buddha*, is, at present, residing in this realm awaiting the right opportunity to be born as a human being and become a *Buddha*.

   Prince Siddhattha's mother, after her death, was born in this realm as a *deva*. According to legend, her incarnation went from here to the Tāvatiṁsa Realm to listen to the *Buddha* teach the *Abhidhamma*.

6. *Nimmānaratī*: the Realm of the *devas* who delight in the created mansions.

7. *Paranimmitavasavattī*: the Realm of the *devas* who make others' creation serve their own ends.

The last six are the realms of the *devas* whose physical forms are more subtle and refined than those of human beings and are imperceptible to the naked eye. These celestial beings, too, are subject to death, as all mortals are. In some respects, such as in

[701] Literally, "those who have an uplifted or developed mind" (*mano ussannaṁ etasaṁ*). The Sanskrit equivalent of *manussa* is *manuṣya*, which means "the sons of Manu." They are so called because they became civilized after Manu the seer.
[702] Sanskrit *Maitreya*, literally, "the loving one."

their constitution, habitat, and food, they excel humans, but they do not, as a rule, transcend humans in wisdom. They have spontaneous births, appearing like youths and maidens of fifteen or sixteen years of age.

These six Celestial Planes are temporary blissful abodes, where beings are supposed to live enjoying fleeting sensory pleasures.

The four unhappy states (*duggati*) and the seven happy states (*sugati*) are collectively termed *kāmaloka* "the Sensory Sphere."

Brahmā Realms, or Rūpaloka

Superior to these Sensory Planes are the *Brahmā* Realms, or *rūpaloka* (Form Realms), where beings delight in jhānic bliss, achieved by renouncing sense desires.

Rūpaloka consists of sixteen realms according to the *jhānas*, or Absorptions, cultivated. They are as follows:

A. The Plane of the First *Jhāna*:

1. *Brahmā Pārisajja*: the Realm of the *Brahmā's* Retinue.
2. *Brahmā Purohita*: the Realm of the *Brahmā's* Ministers.
3. *Mahā Brahmā*: The Realm of the Great *Brahmās*.

The highest of the first three is *Mahā Brahmā*. It is so called because the dwellers in this Realm excel others in happiness, beauty, and age limit, owing to the intrinsic merit of their mental development.

B. The Plane of the Second *Jhāna*:

4. *Parittābhā*: The Realm of the Minor Luster.
5. *Appamāṇābhā*: The Realm of the Infinite Luster.
6. *Ābhassarā*: The Realm of the Radiant *Brahmās*.

C. The Plane of the Third *Jhāna*:

7. *Parittasubhā*: The Realm of the *Brahmās* of Minor Aura.
8. *Appamāṇasubhā*: The Realm of the *Brahmās* of Infinite Aura.
9. *Subhakiṇhā*: The Realm of the *Brahmās* of Steady Aura.

D. The Plane of the Fourth *Jhāna*:

10. *Vehapphala*: The Realm of the *Brahmās* of Great Reward.
11. *Asaññasatta*: The Realm of Mindless Beings.
12. *Suddhāvāsa*: The Pure Abodes, which are further subdivided into five, namely:

- *Aviha*: The Durable Realm;
- *Atappa*: The Serene Realm;
- *Sudassa*: The Beautiful Realm;
- *Sudassi*: The Clear-Sighted Realm;
- *Akaṇiṭṭha*: The Highest Realm.

Only those who have cultivated the *jhānas*, or Absorptions, are born in these higher planes. Those who have developed the First *jhāna* are born in the first Plane; those who have developed the Second and Third *jhānas* are born in the second Plane; those who have developed the Fourth and Fifth *jhānas* are born in the third and fourth Planes respectively.

The first grade of each plane is assigned to those who have developed the *jhānas* to an ordinary degree, the second grade to those who have developed the *jhānas* to a greater extent, and the third grade to those who have gained a complete mastery over the *jhānas*.

In the eleventh plane, called the *asaññasatta*, beings are born without a consciousness. Here, only a material flux exists. Mind is temporarily suspended while the force of *jhāna* lasts. Normally, both mind and matter are inseparable. By the power of meditation, it is possible, at times, to separate matter from mind in this particular case. When an *Arahant* attains the *nirodha samāpatti*,[703] too, his consciousness ceases to exist temporarily. Such a state is almost inconceivable to unenlightened worldlings.

The *suddhāvāssas*, or Pure Abodes, are the exclusive Planes of *Anāgāmīs* (Non-Returners). Ordinary beings are not born in these states. Those who attain *Anāgāmī* in other planes are reborn in these Pure Abodes. Later, they attain Arahantship and live in those planes until their life term ends, at which point they pass directly into *parinibbāna*. The Pure Abodes are worlds of form, because it is not possible to attain Enlightenment without the realization of Impermanence (*anicca*), Suffering (*dukkha*), and Non-self (*anattā*) in the physical as well as the mental constituents of personality.

Arūpaloka

There are four other planes, called *arūpaloka*, which are totally devoid of matter or bodies. In these realms, mind alone exists without matter.

[703] *Nirodha samāpatti* "attainment of extinction," also called *saññā-vedayita-nirodha* "extinction of feeling and perception," is the temporary suspension of all consciousness and mental activity following immediately upon the semiconscious state called "Sphere of Neither Perception nor Non-perception." The absolutely necessary preconditions to this attainment are said to be perfect mastery of all eight absorptions (*jhānas*) as well as the previous attainment of *Anāgāmī* or Arahantship. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 127—128.

> *"Just as it is possible for an iron bar to be suspended in the air as long as it retains any unexpended momentum, even so, the formless being appears through being flung into that state by a powerful mind force. There, it remains until that momentum is expired. This is a temporary separation of mind and matter, which normally co-exist."*[704]

It should be mentioned that there is no sex distinction in the *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka*.

The *arūpaloka* is divided into four planes according to the four *arūpa jhānas*:

1. *Ākāsānānañcāyatana*: The Sphere of the Conception of Infinite Space.
2. *Viññāṇañcāyatana*: The Sphere of the Conception of Infinite Consciousness.
3. *Ākiñcaññāyatana*: The Sphere of the Conception of Nothingness.
4. *N'eva Saññā Nāsaññayatana*: The Sphere of Neither Perception nor Non-perception.

Concluding Remarks

It should be noted that the *Buddha* did not attempt to expound any cosmological theory. The essence of the *Buddha's* Teaching is not affected by the existence or nonexistence of these planes. No one is bound to believe anything if it does not appeal to his reason. Nor is it proper, on the other hand, to reject anything merely because it cannot be conceived by one's limited knowledge. ■

[704] Kassapa Thera.

34

How Rebirth Takes Place

"The pile of bones of [all the bodies of] one man, who has alone lived one aeon, would equal the height of a mountain — so said the Mighty Seer."[705]

The Dying Moment

According to the *Abhidhamma*, a *kamma*, *kamma nimitta*, or *gati nimitta* is presented to the dying man at the time of death.

Here, *kamma* means some good or bad act done during one's lifetime or immediately before one's dying moment. It manifests as a good or bad thought. If the dying person had committed one of the five heinous crimes (*garuka kamma*), such as killing one's parents, etc., or had done highly virtuous acts, such as having developed the *jhānas* (Absorptions), he would experience such a *kamma* before his death. These acts are so powerful that they totally eclipse all other actions and appear very vividly to the mind. If he had done no such weighty action, he may take for his object of the dying thought process a *kamma* done immediately before death (*āsanna kamma*), which may be called a "Death Proximate *kamma*."

In the absence of a "Death Proximate *kamma*," a habitual good or bad act (*āciṇṇa kamma*) is presented, such as the healing of the sick in the case of a good physician, or the teaching of the *Dhamma* in the case of a pious *Bhikkhu*, or stealing in the case of a thief. Failing all these, some casual trivial good or bad act (*kaṭattā kamma*) becomes the object of the dying thought process.

Kamma nimitta, or "symbol," "sign," means a mental image of any sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, or idea that was predominant at the time of some important activity, good or bad, such as a vision of knives or dying animals in the case of a butcher, of patients in the case of a physician, or of the object of worship in the case of a devoted practitioner, etc.

Gati nimitta, or "symbol of destiny," means some symbolic image of the place of future birth. This frequently presents itself to a dying person and, at first, stamps its gladness or gloom upon his facial expression and/or physical demeanor. Immediately thereafter, the symbolic mental images of his future rebirth occur. If they are bad, they can, at times, be remedied. This is done by influencing the thoughts of the dying person.

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[705] *Itivuttaka*.

Such foreboding images of one's destiny may be visions of fire, forests, mountainous regions, a mother's womb, celestial mansions, and the like.

Taking for the object a *kamma*, or a *kamma* symbol, or a symbol of destiny, a thought process runs its course even if the death is an instantaneous one.

For the sake of convenience, let us imagine that the dying person is to be reborn in the human realm and that the object is some good *kamma*. His *bhavanga* consciousness is interrupted, vibrates for a thought moment, and passes away, after which the mind-door consciousness (*manodvāravajjana*) arises and passes away. Then comes the psychologically important stage — the *javana* process —, which here runs only for five thought moments by reason of its weakness, instead of the normal seven. It lacks all reproductive power, its main function being the mere regulation of the new existence (*abhinavakaraṇa*). Since the object here is desirable, the consciousness experienced is a moral one. The *tadālambana* consciousness, which has for its function a registering or identifying for two moments of the object so perceived, may or may not follow. After this, the death consciousness (*cuticitta*) occurs — the last thought moment to be experienced in the present life.

There is a misconception among some that the subsequent birth is conditioned by this last death consciousness (*cuticitta*), which, in itself, has no special function to perform. What actually conditions rebirth is that which is experienced during the *javana* process.

With the cessation of the death consciousness, death actually occurs. Then, no material qualities born of mind and food (*cittaja* and *āhāraja*) are produced. Only a series of material qualities born of heat (*utuja*) goes on until, at last, the corpse is reduced to dust.[706]

Rebirth

Simultaneous with the arising of the rebirth consciousness, the "body decad," the "sex decad," and the "base decad" (*kāya-bhāva-vatthu-dasaka*) arise.

According to Buddhism, therefore, sex is determined at the moment of conception and is conditioned by *kamma*, not by any fortuitous combination of sperm and ovum cells.

The passing away of the consciousness of the past birth is the occasion for the arising of the new consciousness in the subsequent birth. However, nothing permanent or unchangeable is transmitted from the past to the present.

Just as the wheel rests on the ground only at one point, so, strictly speaking, we live only for one thought moment. We are always in the present, and that present is ever

[706] According to Buddhism, material qualities are produced in four ways:
1. *Kamma* — past moral and immoral actions;
2. *Utu* — physical change, or the *tejo* (heat) element, which includes both hot and cold;
3. *Citta* — mind and mental properties;
4. *Āhāra* — nutriment that exists in food.

slipping into the irrevocable past. Each momentary consciousness of this ever-changing life process, on passing away, transmits its whole energy, with all the indelibly recorded impressions on it, to its successor. Every fresh consciousness, therefore, consists of the potentialities of its predecessors, together with something more. At the moment of death, the consciousness perishes, as, in truth, it perishes every moment, only to give birth to another in a rebirth. This renewed consciousness inherits all past experiences. Inasmuch as all impressions are indelibly recorded in the ever-changing palimpsest-like mind, and all potentialities are transmitted from life to life, irrespective of temporary disintegration, thus, there may be reminiscence of past births or past incidents. Whereas, if memory depended solely on brain cells, such reminiscence would be impossible.

> *This new being, which is the present manifestation of a stream of kamma-energy, is not the same as, and has no identity with, the previous one in its line — the aggregates that make up its composition being different from, having no identity with, those that make up the being of its predecessor. And yet, it is not an entirely different being, since it has the same stream of kamma-energy, though manifested, perchance, just by having shown itself in that manifestation, which is now making its presence known in the sense-perceptible world as the new being.*[707]

Death, according to Buddhism, is the cessation of the psychophysical life of any one individual existence. It is the passing away of the vitality (*āyu*), that is, psychic and physical life (*jīvitindriya*), heat (*usma*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Death is not the complete annihilation of a being, for, though a particular life span ends, the force that hitherto activated it is not destroyed.

Just as an electric light is the outward visible manifestation of invisible energy, so, we are the outward manifestations of invisible karmic energy. The bulb may break, and the light may be extinguished, but the current remains, and the light may be reproduced in another bulb. In the same way, the karmic force remains undisturbed by the disintegration of the physical body, and the passing away of the present consciousness leads to the arising of a fresh one in another birth. But nothing unchangeable or permanent "passes" from the present to the future.

In the foregoing case, the thought experienced before death being a moral one, the resultant rebirth consciousness takes, for its material, an appropriate impregnated ovum cell of human parents. The rebirth consciousness (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*) then lapses into the *bhavanga* state.[708]

The continuity of the flux, at death, is unbroken in point of time, and there is no breach in the stream of consciousness.

Rebirth takes place immediately, irrespective of the place of birth, just as an electromagnetic wave, projected into space, is immediately reproduced in a receiving radio set. Rebirth of the mental flux is also instantaneous and leaves no room whatsoever

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[707] Bhikkhu Sīlācāra.

[708] Cf. *Manual of Abhidhamma* by Nārada Thera, p. 273.

for any "intermediate state."[709] Pure Buddhism does not support the belief that a spirit of the deceased person resides in some temporary state until it finds a suitable place for its "reincarnation."

The question of instantaneous rebirth is well expressed in the *Milindapañha*. King Milinda questions Venerable Nāgasena thus:

> *"Venerable Nāgasena, if somebody dies here and is reborn in the world of Brahmā and another dies and is reborn in Kashmir, which of them would arrive first?"*
>
> *"They would arrive at the same time, O King.*
>
> *"In which town were you born, O King?"*
>
> *"In a village called Kalasi, Venerable Sir."*
>
> *"How far is Kalasi from here, O King?"*
>
> *"About a hundred miles, Venerable Sir."*
>
> *"And how far is Kashmir from here, O King?"*
>
> *"About twelve miles, Venerable Sir."*
>
> *"Now, think of the village of Kalasi, O King."*
>
> *"I have done so, Venerable Sir."*
>
> *"And, now, think of Kashmir, O King."*
>
> *"It is done, Venerable Sir."*
>
> *"Which of these two [places], O King, did you think of the more slowly and which the more quickly?"*
>
> *"Both equally quickly, Venerable Sir."*
>
> *"Just so, O King, he who dies here and is reborn in the world of Brahmā is not reborn later than he who dies here and is reborn in Kashmir."*
>
> *"Give me another simile, Venerable Sir."*
>
> *"What do you think, O King? Suppose two birds were flying in the air and they should settle at the same time, one upon a high and the other upon a low tree. Which bird's shadow would fall upon the ground first, and which bird's later?"*
>
> *"Both shadows would appear at the same time, not one of them earlier and the other later."*

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[709] According to the Tibetan view, there is an intermediate state (the so-called "*bardo*"), where beings can remain for one, two, three, five, six, or seven weeks, until the forty-ninth day, before they are reborn. Six kinds of intermediate states are elaborated: (1) the *bardo* of birth; (2) dream *bardo*; (3) *bardo* of meditation (*dhyāna*); (4) *bardo* of the moment of death; (5) *bardo* of supreme reality (*dharmatā*); and (6) *bardo* of becoming. While the first three *bardos* characterize the present life as a phase of "suspended states," the last three *bardos* encompass the forty-nine-day-long process of death and rebirth. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications [1989]), p. 28. These views are contrary to the original teachings of Buddhism. For more information on the *bardo* teachings, cf. Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco [1992]), and (attributed to) Padmasambhava, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead: The Great Liberation by Hearing in the Intermediate States (Bardo Thödol)*, revealed by Terton Karma Lingpa, translated by Gyurme Dorje, edited by Graham Coleman and Tubten Jinpa, with an introductory commentary by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (New York, NY: Viking [2005]).

Routes to Rebirth

The question might arise: Are impregnated ovum cells always ready, waiting to take up the rebirth thought?

Living beings are infinite in number, and so are world systems. Moreover, an impregnated ovum is not the only route to rebirth. Earth, an almost insignificant speck in the universe, is not the only habitable planet, and human beings are not the only living beings. As such, it is not difficult to understand that there will always be appropriate sentient entities available to receive the mental flux of dying beings.

Buddhist Funeral Rites

In general, a Buddhist funeral is a simple, solemn, and dignified ceremony, which varies from region to region and country to country in Asia.

Among Buddhists, death is regarded as an occasion of major religious significance, both for the deceased and for the survivors. For the deceased, it marks the moment when a transition begins to a new mode of existence within the rounds of rebirths (*saṁsāra*). When death occurs, all the karmic forces that the dead person accumulated during the course of his or her lifetime become activated and set about determining the next rebirth. For the living, death is a powerful reminder of the *Buddha's* teaching on impermanence (*anicca*); it also provides an opportunity to assist the deceased person as he or she fares on to a new existence.

Both aspects of death — the message of impermanence, and the opportunity to help the departed loved one — find expression in the Buddhist funeral rites of Śri Lanka. Buddhist monks play a prominent role in the funeral proceedings. One of the most important parts of the funeral rites is the ritual called "offering of cloth on behalf of the dead" (*mataka-vastra-pūjā*). This is done prior to the cremation or the burial of the body. Monks are assembled in the home of the dead person or in the cemetery. The proceedings begin with the administration of the Five Precepts to the assembled crowd by one of the monks. This is followed by the recitation of the following well-known verse:

Aniccā vata saṁkhārā, uppādavayadhammino
Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti tesaṁ vūpasamo sukho.

"Impermanent, alas, are all phenomena, subject to rise and fall.
Having arisen, they cease; their subsiding is bliss."

Next follows the ritual, which consists of the offering of a length of new white cloth to the monks. The cloth, called a *paṁsukūla* — literally, a dust-heap cloth — is intended to be cut in pieces and then stitched into a robe.

After offering the cloth, the close relatives of the deceased sit together on a mat, assume a reverential posture, and, together, pour water from a vessel into a cup placed

upon a plate until the cup overflows. While the water is being poured, the monks chant in unison the following verses:

Unname udakaṁ vaṭṭaṁ yathā ninnaṁ pavattati
Evameva ito dinnaṁ petānaṁ upakappati.
Yathā vārivahā pūrā paripūrenti sāgaraṁ
Evameva ito dinnaṁ petānaṁ upakappati.

"Just as the water fallen on high ground flows to a lower level,
Even so, what is given here accrues to the departed.
Just as the full flowing rivers fill the ocean,
Even so, what is given here accrues to the departed."

The context shows that the pouring of water in this manner is a ritualistic act symbolizing the beneficial inheritance of the merit (*puñña*) transferred by the living to the dead, as a kind of offering. The entire ritual is, hence, an act of grace whereby merit is transferred to the departed so that they may find relief from any unhappy realm in which they might have been reborn.

Another funeral rite is the "delivering a discourse for the benefit of the dead" (*mataka-baṇa*). The usual practice is to conduct a monk to the house of the dead person, generally on the third day (or occasionally on any day within a week) after the funeral and to request him to deliver a discourse suitable to the occasion. Accordingly, he delivers a discourse for about an hour's duration to the assembled audience, which inevitably consists of the relatives of the deceased and the neighbors of the household. At the end of the discourse, the monk gets the relatives to recite the necessary verses to transfer the merit acquired by organizing the event to the deceased. Following this, a gift is offered to the monk, and those in attendance are served refreshments.

Three months after the date of death, it is customary to hold an almsgiving (*sanghika dāna*) in memory of the deceased and thence to repeat it annually. As in the case of the rituals mentioned above, here, too, the purpose is to impart merit to the deceased. Hence, it is called "offerings in the name of the dead" (*mataka dāna*). The basis of the practice is the belief that, if the departed relative has been reborn into an unhappy existence, he or she would expect his or her living relatives to transfer merit in this manner to help ease his or her suffering. ■

Further Reading

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35

What is it that is Reborn? (Anattā — No Soul)

"Neither the same nor yet another."[710]

Soul Theory

Apart from mind and matter, which constitute this so-called "being," Buddhism does not recognize the existence of an immortal soul (or an eternal ego, or a permanent self), which man has obtained in a mysterious way from an equally mysterious source.

A soul that is eternal must necessarily remain always the same without any change whatsoever. If the soul that is supposed to be the essence of man is eternal, there could be neither a rise nor a fall. Nor could one explain why "different souls are so variously constituted at the outset."

To justify the existence, after death, of endless happiness in an eternal heaven or unending torment in an eternal hell, some religions postulate an immortal soul.

Bertrand Russell writes:[711]

> *Finally, it should be said that the old distinction between soul and body has evaporated quite as much because "matter" has lost its solidity as because "mind" has lost its spirituality. Psychology is just beginning to be scientific. In the present state of psychology belief in immortality can at any rate claim no support from science.*

According to the learned author (Ernst Haeckel) of the *Riddle of the Universe*:

> *The theological proof that a personal creator has breathed an immortal soul (generally regarded as a portion of the Divine Soul) into man is a pure myth. The cosmological proof that the "moral order of the world" demands the eternal duration of the human soul is baseless dogma. The teleological proof that the "higher destiny" of man involves the perfecting of his defective, earthly soul*

[710] *Visuddhimagga*.

[711] Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science* (Home University Library [1935]), pp. 132—133.

> *beyond the grave — rests on a false anthropism. The moral proof — that the defects and the unsatisfied desires of earthly existence must be fulfilled by "compensative justice" on the other side of eternity — is nothing more than a pious wish. The ethnological proof — that the belief in immortality, like the belief in God, is an innate truth, common to all humanity — is an error in fact. The ontological proof — that the soul, being a simple, immaterial, and indivisible entity cannot be involved in the corruption of death — is based on an entirely erroneous view of the psychic phenomena; it is a spiritualistic fallacy. All these and similar "proofs of athanatism" are in a parlous condition; they are definitely annulled by the scientific criticism of the last few decades.*

If nothing in the form of a spirit, or soul, passes from this life to the next, what is it that is reborn? In this question, it is taken for granted that there is something to be reborn.

A few centuries ago, it was argued by the French philosopher René Descartes *cogitō, ergō sum* "I think, therefore, I am." On the surface, this might appear to be true, but first it has to be proved that there is an "I" to think.

By custom, we say that the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, although we know that, in truth, it is not so. Science has shown that one cannot strike an identical place twice, although, to all outward appearances, one has done so.

Everything changes so quickly. For no two moments are we the same.

Buddhism agrees with Bertrand Russell when he says:[712]

> *There is obviously some reason in which I am the same person I was yesterday, and, to take an even more obvious example, if I simultaneously see a man and hear him speaking, there is some sense in which the I that sees is the same as the I that hears.*

Until recently, scientists believed in an indivisible and indestructible atom. But, again, as noted by Russell:[713]

> *For sufficient reason physicists have reduced the atom to a series of events; for equally good reasons psychologists find that mind has not the identity of a single continuing thing but is a series of occurrences bound together by certain intimate relations. The question of immortality, therefore, has become the question whether these intimate relations exist between occurrences connected with a living body and other occurrences which take place after that body is dead.*

As C. E. M. Joad says in *The Meaning of Life*:

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[712] Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science* (Home University Library [1935]), p. 132.
[713] Bertrand Russell, *Religion and Science* (Home University Library [1935]), p. 166.

Matter has since disintegrated under our very eyes. It is no longer solid; it is no longer enduring; it is no longer determined by compulsive laws; and more important than all it is no longer known.

The so-called "atoms," it seems, are both "divisible and destructible." The electrons and protons that compose atoms "can meet and annihilate one another, while their persistence, such as it is, is rather that of a wave, lacking fixed boundaries and in process of continual change both as regards shape and position, than that of a thing."

George Berkeley (Bishop of Cloyne), who showed that this so-called "atom" was metaphysical fiction, held that there existed a spiritual substance called a soul.

David Hume, in his search for a soul, declares:

There are some philosophers who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our self: that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity. For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other — of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception ...[714]

Henri Bergson says:

All consciousness is time existence; and a conscious state is not a state that endures without changing. It is a change without ceasing; when change ceases, it ceases; it is itself nothing but change.

John B. Watson, a distinguished American psychologist, states:

No one has ever touched a soul, or has seen one in a test tube, or has in any way come into relationship with it as he has with the other objects of daily experience. Nevertheless to doubt its existence is to become a heretic, and once might possibly even have led to the loss of one's head. Even today a man holding a public position dare not question it.[715]

Dealing with this question of a soul, William James writes:

This soul-theory is a complete superfluity, so far as according for the actually verified facts of conscious experience goes. So far no one can be compelled to subscribe to it for definite scientific reasons.

[714] Quoted from William James, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 351.
[715] Watson, *Behaviorism*, p. 4.

> *This me is an empirical aggregate of things objectively known. The I which knows them cannot itself be an aggregate, neither for psychological purpose need it be considered to be an unchanging metaphysical entity like the soul, or a principal like the pure Ego viewed as out of time. It is a thought, at each moment different from that of the last moment, but appropriative of the latter, together with all that the latter calls its own. All the experiential facts find their place in this description, unencumbered with any hypothesis save that of the existence of passing thoughts or states of mind.*[716]

He concludes his interesting chapter on the soul with the words:

> *And in this book the provisional solution which we have reached must be the final word: The thoughts themselves are the thinkers.*

And this is an echo of the very words of the *Buddha* from 2600 years ago in the valley of the Ganges: "The thoughts themselves are the thinkers."

Paramatthas — The Four Elements

Buddhism, teaching a psychology without a psyche, resolves the living being into mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*), which are in a state of constant flux.

In olden days, the Indian sages, too, believed in an indivisible atom, which they called *paramāṇu*. According to the ancient belief, thirty-six *paramāṇus* constitute one *aṇu*; thirty-six *aṇus*, one *tajjāri*; thirty-six *tajjāris*, one *rathareṇu*. The minute particles of dust seen dancing in the sunbeam are called *rathareṇus*. One *paramāṇu* is, therefore, 1/46,656th part of a *rathareṇu*. With His supernormal vision, the *Buddha* further analyzed the *paramāṇu* and declared that it consists of interrelated forces known as *paramatthas*, or essentials of matter.

These *paramatthas* are the elements *paṭhavī* (the so-called "earth element," that is to say, extension), *āpo* (the so-called "water element," that is to say, cohesion), *tejo* (the so-called "heat element," that is to say, both hot and cold), and *vāyo* (the so-called "air element," that is to say, motion).

Paṭhavī means the element of extension, the substratum of matter. Without it, objects cannot occupy space. The qualities of hardness and softness, which are relative, are two conditions of the same element.

Āpo is the element of cohesion. It is the element that makes the scattered atoms of matter cohere and gives us the idea of solid bodies. When solid bodies are melted, this element becomes more prominent in the resulting fluid. This element is found even in minute particles, when solid bodies are reduced to powder. The elements of extension and cohesion are so closely interrelated that, when cohesion ceases, extension disappears.

[716] William James, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 215.

Tejo is the element of heat. Cold is also a form of *tejo*. Both hot and cold are included in *tejo*, because they possess the power of maturing bodies, or, in other words, it is the vitalizing energy. Preservation and decay are due to this element. Unlike the other three essentials of matter, this element, also called *utu*, has the power to regenerate itself.

Vāyo is the element of motion. Movements are caused by this element. Motion is regarded as the force or the generator of heat. "Motion and heat in the material realm correspond, respectively, to consciousness and *kamma* in the mental."

These four elements are the fundamental units of matter and are invariably combined with the four derivative elements, namely, color (*vaṇṇa*), odor (*gandha*), taste (*rasa*), and nutritive essence (*ojā*).

Thus, mind (*nāma*) and matter (*rūpa*) are both impermanent and unstable. Everything that exists is composed of *kalāpas*,[717] each arising and dying out simultaneously. Each *kalāpa* is a mass formed by the combination of the eight nature elements. The first four are the essential material qualities that are predominant in a *kalāpa*: they are extension (*paṭhavī*), cohesion (*āpo*), heat (*tejo*), and motion (*vāyo*). The remaining four elements are merely subsidiaries that are dependent on and derived from the first four — as noted above, they are: color (*vaṇṇa*), odor (*gandha*), taste (*rasa*), and nutritive essence (*ojā*). It is only when the eight nature elements are combined together that the entity of a *kalāpa* is formed. In other words, during the very brief moment of the co-existence of these eight nature elements, there is an entity that is known as a *kalāpa*. These *kalāpas* are in a state of perpetual change or flux (*anicca*, or impermanence) — they are nothing but a stream of energy.[718] The body, as we call it, is not an entity as it seems to be but a continuum of matter with a co-existing life force.

Even though the four elements and the derivatives are inseparable and interrelated, one element may predominate over another — for example, the element of extension predominates in earth, cohesion in water, heat in fire, and motion in air.

Mind-Moments

Mind, the more important part in the complex machinery of man, consists of fifty-two mental states. Feeling (*vedanā*), or sensation, is one, perception (*saññā*) is another. The remaining fifty are collectively called "volitional activities" (*saṁkhāra*), a rendering that does not exactly convey the meaning of the Pāḷi term. Of them, volition, or *cetanā*, is the most important factor. All these psychic states arise in a consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

According to Buddhist philosophy, there is no moment when one does not experience a particular kind of consciousness, hanging on to some object, whether physical or mental. The time limit of such a consciousness is termed one "thought-moment," or "mind-moment" (*cittakkhaṇa*). Each mind-moment is followed by another.

[717] Sanskrit *kalāpa* = "a group of qualities pertaining to the same entity."

[718] According to Buddhism, matter endures only for seventeen mind-moments. The commentators state that the time duration of one mind-moment is even less than the one-millionth part of the time occupied by a flash of lightning.

Thus, the succession of mental states contains a time element. The rapidity of the succession of such mind-moments is hardly conceivable.

Each unit of consciousness consists of three instants (*khaṇa*). They are: (1) arising, or genesis (*uppāda*); (2) static instant, or development (*ṭhiti*); and (3) ceasing, or dissolution (*bhanga*).

Immediately after the cessation stage of a mind-moment, there occurs the genesis of the subsequent mind-moment. Each momentary consciousness of this ever-changing life process, on passing away, transmits its whole energy, all the indelibly recorded impressions, to its successor. Every fresh consciousness consists of the potentialities of its predecessors, together with something more. There is, therefore, a continuous flow of consciousness like a stream without any interruption. The subsequent mind-moment is neither absolutely the same as its predecessor — since its composition is not identical — nor entirely different — being the same stream of life. There is no identical being, but there is an identity in process.

It must not be understood that consciousness is joined together in bits like a train or a chain. On the contrary, "it constantly flows on like a river receiving from the tributary streams of sense contact accretions to its flood, and ever dispensing to the world around it the thought-stuff it has gathered along the way."[719] It has birth for its source and death for its mouth.

Here occurs a juxtaposition of fleeting states of consciousness but not a superposition of such states, as some appear to believe. No state, once gone, ever recurs — none is absolutely identical with what went before. These states constantly change, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments. Worldlings, enmeshed in the web of illusion, mistake this apparent continuity to be something eternal and go to the extent of introducing an unchanging soul (the supposed doer and observer of all actions) into this ever-changing consciousness.

No Transmigration

How is rebirth possible without a soul to be reborn?

According to Buddhism, birth is the arising of the *khandhas*, the aggregates, or groups (*khandhānam pātubhāvo*).

Just as the arising of a physical state is conditioned by a preceding state as its cause, so, the appearance of these psychophysical phenomena is conditioned by causes anterior to its birth. The present process of becoming is the result of the craving (*taṇhā*) for becoming in the previous birth, and the present instinctive craving conditions life in a future birth.

Just as the process of one life span is possible without a permanent entity passing from one mind-moment to another, so, a series of life processes is possible without anything transmigrating from one existence to the next.

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[719] *Compendium of Philosophy: Introduction*, p. 12.

The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth should be differentiated from the theory of reincarnation, which implies the transmigration of a soul and its invariable material rebirth.

In the *Milindapañha* and *Visuddhimagga*, Venerable Nāgasena and Buddhaghosa, respectively, have employed several similes to illustrate the truth that nothing whatsoever transmigrates from one life to another.

The simile of the flame is very striking. Life is compared to a flame. Rebirth is the transmitting of this flame from one group to another. The flame of life is continuous, although there is an apparent break at so-called "death."

King Milinda questions:

"Venerable Nāgasena, does rebirth take place without anything transmigrating?"

"Yes, O King, rebirth does, indeed, take place without anything transmigrating."

"Give me an illustration, Venerable Sir."

"Suppose, O King, a man were to light one light from [another] light; pray, would one light have passed over to the other light?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

"In exactly the same way, O King, does birth take place without anything transmigrating."

"Give me another illustration."

"Do you remember, O King, having learned, when you were a boy, some verse or other from your teacher of poetry?"

"Yes, Venerable Sir."

"Pray, O King, did the verse pass over to you from your teacher?"

"No, indeed, Venerable Sir."

"In exactly the same way, O King, does rebirth take place without anything transmigrating."

Again, King Milinda questions Venerable Nāgasena:

"Venerable Nāgasena, what is it that is born into the next existence?"

"O King, it is mind and body that is born into the next existence.

"O King, it is not the same mind and body that is born into the next existence, but, with this mind and body, O King, one does a deed — it may be good, or it may be evil — and, by reason of this deed, another mind and body is born into the next existence."

"Venerable Sir, if it is not this mind and body that is born into the next existence, is not one freed from one's evil deeds?"

"If one were not born into another existence, one would be freed from one's evil deeds; but, O King, inasmuch as one is born into another existence, therefore, one is not freed from one's evil deeds."

"Give me an illustration."

"It is as if, O King, a man were to take away another man's mangoes, and the owner of the mangoes were to seize him, and show him to the king, and say: 'Sire, this man has taken away my mangoes'; and the other were to say: 'Sire, I did not take away his mangoes. The mangoes that this man planted were different from those that I took away. I am not liable to punishment.' Pray, O King, would the man be liable to punishment?"

"Assuredly, Venerable Sir, he would be liable to punishment."

"For what reason?"

"Because, in spite of what he might say, he would be liable to punishment for the reason that the last mangoes were derived from the first."

"In exactly the same way, O King, with this mind and body, one does a deed — it may be good, or it may be bad —, and, by reason of this deed, another mind and body is born into the next existence. Therefore, one is not freed from one's evil deeds."

Venerable Buddhaghosa elucidates this intricate point by citing the similes of echo, light, impression of a seal, and reflection in a mirror.

A modern writer illustrates this process by a series of billiard balls:

If, for instance, another ball is rolled against the last stationary ball, the moving ball will stop dead, and the foremost stationary ball will move on. The first moving ball does not pass over, it remains behind, it dies; but it is undeniably the movement of that ball, its momentum, its kamma, and not any newly created movement, which is reborn in the foremost ball. [720]

In like manner — to use the conventional terms —, the body dies, and its karmic force is reborn in another without anything transmigrating from this life to the other. The last mind-moment of this life perishes, conditioning another mind-moment in a subsequent life. The new being is neither absolutely the same, since it has changed, nor is it totally different, being the same stream of *kamma*-energy. There is merely a continuity of a particular life flux — just that and nothing more. ■

Further Reading

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[720] Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, p. 106.

36

Moral Responsibility

"By oneself is evil done; by oneself is one defiled.
By oneself is evil not done; by oneself is one purified.
Everyone has the choice to be pure or impure.
No one can purify another."[721] [722]

Is it the doer of the act or another who reaps the results in the succeeding birth?[723]

To say that he who sows is absolutely the same as he who reaps is one extreme, and to say that he who sows is totally different from he who reaps is the other extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the *Buddha* teaches the doctrine of the middle way in terms of cause and effect. "Neither is it the same nor another" (*na ca so na ca aññ*o), writes Venerable Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhimagga*. The evolution of the butterfly may be cited as an illustration: Its initial stage is as an egg. Then, it turns into a caterpillar. Later, it develops into a chrysalis, and, eventually, into a butterfly. This process occurs in the course of one lifetime. The butterfly is neither the same as, nor totally different from, the caterpillar. Here, also, there is a flux of life, a continuity.

Venerable Nāgasena explains this point by citing the illustration of a lamp that burns throughout the night. The flame of the first watch is not identical with that of the last watch, yet, throughout the night, the light burns in dependence upon one and the same lamp. As with the flame, so, there is a continuity of life — each succeeding stage depends upon the preceding one.

If there is no soul, can there be any moral responsibility? Yes, because there is a continuity, or identity, in process, which is what, in Buddhism, is substituted for an identical personality.

For example, a boy becomes a man. The latter is neither absolutely the same as the former, since the cells have undergone a complete change, nor totally different, both being part of the same stream of life. Nevertheless, the individual, as an adult, is responsible for whatever he has done in his childhood. Whether the flux dies here and is reborn elsewhere or continues to exist in the same life, the essential factor is this

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[721] One can neither purify nor defile another.
[722] *Dhammapada*, XII, The Self, verse 165.
[723] *Milindapañha*.

continuity. Suppose a person was Mr. Smith in his last birth and Mr. Jones in the current life. With the death of Mr. Smith, the physical vehicle, the outward manifestation of karmic energy, is relinquished, and, with the birth of Mr. Jones, a fresh physical vehicle arises. Despite the apparent material changes, the invisible stream of consciousness (*cittasantati*) continues to flow, uninterrupted by death, carrying along with it all the impressions received from the tributary streams of sense. Conventionally speaking, must not Mr. Jones be responsible for the actions of Mr. Smith, who was his predecessor?

Some may object that, in this case, there is no memory, owing to the intervening death. But is identity of memory absolutely essential in assessing moral responsibility? Strictly speaking, it is not essential at all.

If, for instance, a person were to commit a crime and suddenly, losing his memory, were to forget the incident, would he not still be responsible for his act? His forgetfulness would not exempt him from responsibility for committing the crime. To this, some may ask: "What is the use of punishing him, for he is not aware that he is being punished for that crime? Is there any justice here?" Of course there is not, if we are arbitrarily governed by a God who rewards and punishes us.

Buddhists, however, believe in a just and rational law of *kamma* that operates automatically, and they speak in terms of cause and effect instead of rewards and punishments.

In the words of Bhikkhu Silācāra:

> *If a person does something in sleep, gets out of bed and walks over the edge of a verandah, he will fall into the road below and in all likelihood break an arm or a leg. But this will happen not at all as a punishment for sleep-walking, but merely as a result. And the fact that he did not remember going out on the verandah would not make the slightest difference. So the follower of the Buddha takes measures to see that he does not walk over verandahs or other dangerous places, asleep or awake, so as to avoid hurting himself or anyone who might be below and on whom he might fall.*

The fact that a person does not remember his past is no hindrance to the intelligent understanding of the working of karmic law. It is the knowledge of the inevitability of the sequence of *kamma*, in the course of one's life in *saṁsāra*, that helps to mold the character of a Buddhist. ■

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Karmic Descent and Karmic Ascent

"Kamma differentiates beings into high and low states."[724]

Karmic Descent

Is karmic descent possible? In other words, can a man be reborn as an animal? The Buddhist answer may not be pleasing to all, for Buddhism does, indeed, recognize this possibility.

Material forms, through which the life continuum expresses itself, are merely temporary visible manifestations of karmic energy. The present physical body is not directly evolved from the past physical form but is the successor of this past form, being linked with it through the same stream of karmic energy.

Just as an electric current can be manifested in the forms of light, heat, and motion successively, one not necessarily being evolved from the other, so, this karmic energy may manifest itself in the form of a *deva*, a man, an animal, or some other being, one form having no physical connection with the other. It is one's *kamma* that determines the nature of one's material form, which varies according to the skillfulness or unskillfulness of one's past actions, and this, again, depends entirely on the evolution of one's understanding of reality.

Instead of saying that man becomes an animal, or the other way around, it would be more correct to say that the karmic force that manifested itself in the form of a man may manifest itself in the form of an animal.

In the course of our wanderings in *saṁsāra*, to speak in conventional terms, we gather various experiences, receive manifold impressions, acquire diverse characteristics. Our every thought, word, or deed is indelibly recorded in the palimpsest-like mind. The different natures we thus acquire in the course of such successive births, whether as men, *devas*, animals, or *petas*, lie dormant within us, and, as long as we are worldlings, these undestroyed imprints may, at unexpected moments, rise to the surface in disconcerting strength and reveal our latent karmic tendencies.

It is quite natural for us to remark, after witnessing an unexpected outburst of emotion in a highly cultured person: "How could he have done such a thing? Who would have thought that he could commit such an act?" There is nothing strange in his

[724] *Majjhima Nikāya*.

unexpected behavior. It is just a revelation of a hidden part of his intricate self. This is the reason why men who are normally of impeccable conduct are sometimes tempted to do things that one would least expect of them.

Devadatta, for example, a noble prince by birth and a leading member of the Holy Order, was possessed of supernormal powers on account of his previous good *kamma*. However, overcome by jealousy, latent in him due to his previous evil *kamma*, he made several attempts to kill his own master, the *Buddha*.

Such is the intricate nature of man. One's immediate past is not always a true index of one's immediate future. Every moment, we create fresh *kamma*. In one sense, we are truly what we once were, and we will be what we currently are. In another sense, we are not absolutely what we once were, and we will not be what we currently are. One who was a criminal yesterday may become a saint today, while one who is holy today may turn out to be a wretched sinner tomorrow.

We can safely and rightly be judged by this eternal present. Today, we sow the seeds of the future. At this very moment, we may act the part of a brute and create our own hell, or, on the other hand, we may act the part of a superman and create our own heaven. Each present thought-moment conditions the next thought-moment. The subsequent birth also, according to Buddhist philosophy, is determined by the last thought-process we experienced in this life. Just as, through the course of one's life, each thought perishes, giving up all its potentialities to its successor, even so, the last thought-process of this life ends, transmitting all its acquired characteristics and natures to the succeeding moment, namely, the first thought-moment (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*) in the next birth.

Now, if the dying person cherishes a base desire or idea, or experiences a thought, or does an act that befits an animal, his *kamma* will condition him to rebirth in an animal form. That is to say that the karmic force that had previously manifested itself in the form of a man will now manifest itself in the form of an animal. This does not imply that, thereby, all his past good karmic tendencies are lost. They, too, lie dormant, seeking an opportunity to rise to the surface. It is such good *kamma* that will later bring about rebirth as a human being.

The last thought-moment does not, as a rule, depend on the sum-total of our actions in our lifetime. Generally speaking, a good person gets a good rebirth, and a bad person, a bad one. Under exceptional circumstances, however, the unexpected may happen.

Queen Mallikā,[725] for example, led an exemplary life, but, as the result of the memory and regret at her dying moment of a lie to and deception of her husband earlier in her life, she was reborn in a state of woe. However, inasmuch as her good *kamma* was extremely powerful, the penitence lasted only a few days.

"Is this justifiable?" one might ask.

If a holy person, due to some provocation, were to commit a murder, he would be charged as a murderer. His past good actions would, no doubt, stand to his credit and

[725] Queen of King Pasenadi of Kosala, who lived at the time of the *Buddha*.

have their due effect, but the brutal act could not be obliterated by the good he had done in the past. Perhaps, his good record would tend to mitigate the sentence, but never could it acquit him altogether of his heinous crime. This unexpected event would compel him to spend the rest of his life locked away in a prison among similar criminals.

On one occasion, two ascetics, named Panna and Seniya, who were practicing ox asceticism and dog asceticism, came to the *Buddha* and questioned Him about their future destiny. The *Buddha* replied:

> *"In this world, a certain person cultivates thoroughly and constantly the practices, habits, mentality, and manners of a dog. He, having cultivated these canine practices, habits, mentality, and manners thoroughly and constantly, upon the dissolution of the body after death, will be reborn among dogs. Certainly, if he holds such a belief as this — 'By virtue of this practice, this austerity, this noble life, I shall become a god or a deity of some kind' —, that is a false belief of his. For one who holds such a false belief, I declare that there is but one of two future states: the state of torment or that of the animal kingdom. Thus, failing a state of torment, successful dog asceticism only delivers one to companionship with dogs."*[726]

In the same way, the *Buddha* declared that he who observes ox asceticism will, after death, be reborn among oxen.

Thus, there is, indeed, the possibility for karmic descent.

Karmic Ascent

But the contrary, a karmic ascent, is also possible. When, for instance, an animal is about to die, it may experience a moral consciousness that will ripen into a human rebirth. This last thought-process does not depend wholly on any action or thoughts of the animal, for, generally speaking, its mind is dull, and it is incapable of doing any moral action. This depends on some past good deed done during a former round of its existence, which has long been prevented from producing its inevitable results. In its last moment, the animal, therefore, may conceive ideas or images that will cause a human rebirth.

Saṁsāra

Whence we came, whither we go, and when we go, we do not know. However, the fact that we must go, we know for certain.

[726] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Gahapativagga, Kukkuravatika Sutta, no. 57.

Our cherished possessions, our kith and kin cannot come with us — nay, not even our bodies, which we call our own. From elements they came, to elements they return. Empty fame and vain glory vanish into thin air.

Alone we wander in this tempest-tossed sea of *saṁsāra*, wafted hither and thither by our own *kamma*, appearing here as an animal or a human being and there, perchance, as a god or a *brahmā*.

We meet and part, and, yet, we may meet again incognito. For seldom do we find a being who, in the course of our wandering, has not, at one time, been our mother, our father, our sister, our brother, our son, or our daughter.

The *Buddha* says:

> *"If a man were to prune out the grasses, sticks, boughs, and twigs in this India and, collecting them together, should make a pile, laying them in a four inch stack, saying for each: 'This is my mother, this is my mother's mother,' the grasses, sticks, boughs, and twigs in this India would be used up, without having reached the end of the mothers of that man's mother."*

This, indeed, is how closely bound we are with others during our journeyings in *saṁsāra*.

The countless lives we have led and the innumerable sufferings we have been subject to in the infinite past are such that the *Buddha* remarks:

> *"The bones of a single person wandering in saṁsāra would be a cairn, a pile, a heap as [high as] Mount Vepulla, were there a collector of these bones and were the collection not destroyed.*
>
> *"Long have you suffered the death of father and mother, of sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters, and, while you were suffering, you have verily shed tears upon the long way, more than there is water in the four oceans.*
>
> *"Long did your blood flow by the loss of your head when you were born as oxen, buffaloes, rams, goats, etc.*
>
> *"Long have you been caught as thieves or highwaymen or adulterers, and, through your being beheaded, verily, more blood has flowed upon this long way than there is water in the four oceans.*
>
> *"And, thus, for a long time, have you undergone suffering, undergone torment, undergone misfortune and filled the graveyards full, verily, long enough to be dissatisfied with every form of existence, long enough to turn away and free yourself from them all."* ■

38

Nibbāna

"Health is the greatest gift, contentment is the greatest wealth, the trustworthy are the best kinsmen, nibbāna is the greatest happiness."[727]

What Nibbāna Is

Nibbāna is the *summum bonum* of Buddhism.

However clearly and descriptively one may write on this profound subject, however glowing may be the terms in which one attempts to describe its utter serenity, *nibbāna* is impossible to comprehend by merely reading about it in books. *Nibbāna* is not something to be grasped by intellect alone. It is a supramundane state (*lokuttara dhamma*) to be realized by intuitive wisdom.

A purely intellectual understanding of *nibbāna* is impossible, because it is not something to be arrived at by logical reasoning (*atakkāvacara*). The words of the *Buddha* are perfectly logical, but *nibbāna*, the ultimate goal of Buddhism, is beyond the scope of logic. Nevertheless, by reflecting on the positive and negative aspects of life, the logical conclusion emerges that, in contradistinction to a conditioned phenomenal existence, there must exist a sorrowless, deathless, unconditioned state.

The *Jātaka* Commentary states that the *Bodhisatta* himself, in his birth as the ascetic Sumedha, contemplated thus:

"Even as, although misery is,
Yet happiness is also found,
So, though, indeed, existence is,
Non-existence should be sought.

"Even as, although there may be heat,
Yet grateful cold is also found,
So, though the threefold fire exists,[728]
Likewise, nibbāna should be sought.

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[727] *Dhammapada*, XV, Happiness, verse 204.

[728] The reference here is to the threefold fire or the three flames of greed, hatred, and delusion.

"Even as, although there is evil,
That which is good is also found,
So, though it is true that birth exists,
That which is not birth should be sought."

Definition

The Pāḷi word *nibbāna*[729] is composed of *ni-* and *vāna*. *Ni-* is a negative prefix. *Vāna* means "weaving" or "craving." This craving serves as a cord to connect one life with another. "It is called *nibbāna* in that it is a departure from that craving which is called lusting."[730]

As long as one is bound up by craving and attachment, one accumulates fresh *kamma*, which must materialize in one form or another in the eternal cycle of birth and death. When all forms of craving and attachment are eradicated, reproductive karmic forces cease to operate, and one attains *nibbāna*, escaping from the cycle of birth and death. The Buddhist conception of Deliverance is escape from the ever-recurring cycle of life and death (*saṁsāra*) and not merely an escape from sin and hell.

Nibbāna is also explained as the extinction of the fire of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). As the *Buddha* notes:

> *"The whole world is in flames. By what fire is it kindled? By the fire of greed, hatred, and delusion; by the fire of birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair is it kindled."*[731]

In one sense, *nibbāna* may be interpreted as the extinction of the flames of greed, hatred, and delusion. One must not, however, thereby infer that *nibbāna* is nothing but the extinction of these flames. The *means* should be differentiated from the *end*. Here, the extinction of the three flames of greed, hatred, and delusion is the means of attaining *nibbāna*.

Is Nibbāna Nothingness?

To say that *nibbāna* is nothingness simply because one cannot perceive it with the five senses is as illogical as to conclude that light does not exist simply because those who are blind cannot see it. For example, in a well-known Indian fable, a fish, who was acquainted only with water, arguing with a turtle, triumphantly concluded that there could exist no such thing as dry land because he received "No" to all his queries.

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[729] Sanskrit *nirvāṇa*.
[730] *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*.
[731] *Vinaya*, Mahāvagga, the Fire Sermon; *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, the Fire Sermon.

Once upon a time there was a fish. And, just because it was a fish, it had lived all its life in the water and knew nothing whatever about anything else but water. And, one day, as it swam about in the pond where all its days had been spent, it happened to meet a turtle of its acquaintance who had just come back from a little excursion on the land.

"Good day, Mr. Turtle," said the fish. "I have not seen you for a long time. Where have you been?"

"Oh," said the turtle, "I have just been for a trip on dry land."

"On dry land!" exclaimed the fish. "What do you mean 'on dry land?' I have never heard of such a thing. Dry land is nothing."

"Well," said the turtle good-naturedly. "If you want to think so, of course, you may; there is no one who can stop you. But that is where I have been, all the same."

"Oh come," said the fish. "Try to talk sense. Just tell me now what is this dry land of yours like? Is it all wet?"

"No, it is not wet," said the turtle.

"Is it nice and fresh and cool?" asked the fish.

"No, it is not nice and fresh and cool," the turtle replied.

"Is it clear so that light can come through it?"

"No, it is not clear. Light cannot come through it."

"Is it soft and yielding so that I can move my fins about in it and push my nose through it?"

"No, it is not soft and yielding. You cannot swim in it."

"Does it move or flow in streams?"

"No, it neither moves nor flows in streams."

"Does it ever rise up into waves then, with white foam in them?" asked the fish, impatient at having received "No" to all his queries.

"No!" replied the turtle, truthfully. "It never rises up into waves that I have seen."

"There now," exclaimed the fish triumphantly. "Did I not tell you that this dry land of yours was just nothing? I have just asked, and you have answered me that it does not flow in streams nor rise up into waves. And, if it is not a single one of these things, then, what else is it but nothing? Do not tell me."

"Well, well," said the turtle. "If you are determined to think that dry land is nothing, I suppose you must just go on thinking so. But anyone who knows what is water and what is dry land would say that you were just a silly fish, for you think that anything you have never known is nothing just because you have never seen it nor heard of it."

And, with that, the turtle turned away and, leaving the fish behind in its little pond of water, set out on another excursion over the dry land that the fish called "nothing."[732]

[732] Adapted from Bhikkhu Silācara's booklet, *The Four Noble Truths.*

It is evident from this fable that neither can the turtle, who is acquainted with both dry land and water, explain to the fish the real nature of land, nor can the fish grasp what land is, since he is acquainted only with water. In the same way, *Arahants*, who are acquainted with both the mundane and the supramundane, cannot explain to a worldling (*puthujjana*) exactly what the supramundane is in mundane terms, nor can a worldling understand the supramundane merely by mundane knowledge.

The fact that *nibbāna* is realized as one of the mental objects (*vatthudhamma*), decidedly proves that it is not a state of nothingness. If it were so, the *Buddha* would not have described its state in such terms as "infinite" (*ananta*), "unconditioned" (*asaṁkhata*), "incomparable" (*anūpameya*), "supreme" (*anuttara*), "highest" (*para*), "beyond" (*pāra*), "highest refuge" (*parāyana*), "safety" (*tāṇa*), "security" (*khema*), "happiness" (*siva*), "unique" (*kevala*), "abodeless" (*amālaya*), "imperishable" (*akkhara*), "absolute purity" (*visuddha*), "supramundane" (*lokuttara*), "deathless" (*amata*), "peace" (*santi*), "emancipation" (*mutti*), etc.

In the *Udāna*, the *Buddha* refers to *nibbāna* as follows:

> *"There is, O Bhikkhus, an unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and unconditioned state. If, O Bhikkhus, there were not this unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and unconditioned, an escape from the born, originated, made, and conditioned would not be possible. Inasmuch as there is an unborn, unoriginated, unmade, and unconditioned state, an escape from the born, originated, made, and conditioned is possible."*[733]

The *Itivuttaka* states:

> *"The born, become, produced, compounded, made, and, thus, not lasting, but of birth and death, an aggregate, a nest of sickness, brittle, a thing supported by food, come to be, is not a fit thing to take delight in; the escape therefrom, the real, beyond the scope of reason, lasting, unborn, unproduced, the sorrowless, the stainless path that ends the things of woe, the peace from worries, is bliss."*

According to Buddhism, *nibbāna* is, therefore, neither a state of nothingness nor a mere cessation. What it is not, one can definitely say. What precisely it is, however, cannot adequately be expressed in conventional terms, inasmuch as it is unique. It is for self-realization (*paccattaṁ veditabbo*).

[733] According to the Commentary, there are four terms used as synonyms: (1) *ajāta* ("unborn") means that it has not sprung up due to causes or conditions (*paccaya*); (2) *abhūta* ("not become," "unoriginated") means that it has not arisen; (3) inasmuch as it has not sprung up from a cause and has not come into being, it is not made (*akata*) by any means; (4) becoming and arising are characteristics of conditioned things, such as mind and matter, but *nibbāna*, not being subject to these conditions, is unconditioned (*asaṁkhata*).

Sopādisesa and Anupādisesa Nibbāna Dhātu

References are frequently made in the scriptures to *nibbāna* as *sopādisesa*[734] and *anupādisesa nibbāna dhātu*.

These, in fact, are not two kinds of *nibbāna* but, rather, the one single *nibbāna* receiving its name according to whether it is experienced before or after death.

Nibbāna is attainable in this present life itself if the seeker prepares himself for it. Buddhism nowhere states that its ultimate goal can be reached only in a life beyond. Here lies the principal difference between the Buddhist conception of *nibbāna* and the non-Buddhist conception of an eternal heaven, which can only be attained after death.

When *nibbāna* is realized in the body, it is called *sopādisesa nibbāna dhātu*. When an *Arahant* attains *parinibbāna* after the dissolution of the body, without any remainder of any physical existence, it is called *anupādisesa nibbāna dhātu*.

In the *Itivuttaka*, the *Buddha* says.

> *"There are, O Bhikkhus, two elements of nibbāna. What two? The element of nibbāna with the basis (upādi) still remaining and that without basis.*
>
> *"Herein, O Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu is an Arahant, one who has destroyed the Defilements, who has lived the life, done what was to be done, laid aside the burden, who has attained his goal, who has destroyed the fetters of existence, who, rightly understanding, is delivered. His five sense organs still remain, and, inasmuch as he is not devoid of them, he undergoes pleasant and unpleasant experiences. That destruction of his attachments, hatred, and delusion is called 'the Element of nibbāna with the basis still remaining.'*
>
> *"What, O Bhikkhus, is the 'Element of nibbāna without the basis?'*
>
> *"Herein, O Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu is an Arahant, one who has destroyed the Defilements, who has lived the life, done what was to be done, laid aside the burden, who has attained his goal, who has destroyed the fetters of existence, who, rightly understanding, is delivered. In this very life, all his sensations will have no delight for him — they will be cooled. This is called 'the Element of nibbāna without a basis'."*[735] ■

Further Reading

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Bodhi, Bhikkhu (editor). 2005. *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāḷi Canon*. Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications.

[734] *Sa* "with" + *upādi* "basis" (= the five aggregates) + *sesa* "remaining.".

[735] Since he will not be reborn.

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39

Characteristics of Nibbāna

"What is nibbāna, friend? The destruction of greed, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion — that, friend, is called nibbāna."[736]

Saṁsāra and Nibbāna

In contradistinction to *saṁsāra*, or phenomenal existence, *nibbāna* is eternal (*dhuva*), desirable (*subha*), and happy (*sukha*).

According to Buddhism, all things, mundane and supramundane, are classified into two divisions, namely, those conditioned by causes (*saṁkhata*) and those not conditioned by any cause (*asaṁkhata*).

> *"These three are the features of all conditioned things: arising, cessation, and change of state.*
>
> *"These three are the features of all unconditioned things: no arising, no cessation, and no change of state."*[737]

Arising (*uppāda*), or becoming, is an essential characteristic of everything that is conditioned by a cause or causes. That which arises, or becomes, is subject to change and dissolution. Every conditioned thing is constantly becoming and is perpetually changing. The all-pervading law of change applies to everything in the universe — both mental and physical —, ranging from the smallest one-celled creature or tiniest subatomic particle to the highest being or the most massive object. Mind, though imperceptible, changes even faster than matter.

Nibbāna, a supramundane state, realized by *Buddhas* and *Arahants*, is declared not to be conditioned by any cause. Hence, it is not subject to any becoming, change, and dissolution. It is birthless (*ajāta*), decayless (*ajara*), and deathless (*amara*). Strictly speaking, *nibbāna* is neither a cause nor an effect. Hence, it is unique (*kevala*).

Everything that has sprung from a cause must inevitably pass away and, as such, is undesirable (*asubha*).

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[736] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.
[737] *Anguttara Nikāya*.

Life is man's dearest possession, but, when he is confronted with insuperable difficulties and unbearable burdens, then, that very life becomes an intolerable burden. Sometimes, he tries to seek relief by putting an end to his life, as if suicide would solve all his problems.

Bodies are adorned and adored. But those charming, adorable, and enticing forms, when disfigured by time and disease, become extremely repulsive.

Men desire to live peacefully and happily with those who are near and dear to them, surrounded by amusements and pleasures, but, if by some misfortune, the wicked world runs counter to their ambitions and desires, the inevitable sorrow is then almost indescribably painful.

The following story illustrates the fleeting nature of life and its alluring pleasures:

> *A man was making his way through a thick forest beset with thorns and stones. Suddenly, to his great consternation, an elephant appeared and started chasing him. Fearful, he started running as fast as he could, and, seeing a well, he ran to hide in it. But, to his horror, he saw a poisonous snake at the bottom of the well. However, lacking any other means of escape, he jumped into the well and clung to a thorny creeper that was growing inside of it. Looking up, he saw two mice — one white and one black — gnawing at the creeper. Over his face, there was a beehive, from which occasional drops of honey trickled.*
>
> *This man, foolishly unmindful of his precarious position, began greedily licking the honey. A kind person came along and volunteered to show him how to escape from the well. But the greedy man refused to be helped until he had finished enjoying the honey.*

The thorny path through the forest represents *saṁsāra*, the thorny path of life. Man's life is not a bed of roses. It is beset with difficulties and obstacles to overcome, with opposition and unjust criticism, with attacks and insults to be borne. Such is the thorny path of life.

The elephant represents death; the snake, old age; the thorny creeper, birth; the two mice, night and day. The drops of honey correspond to the fleeting sensory pleasures of cyclic existence (*saṁsāra*). The man represents the normal worldling (*puthujjana*). The kind person represents the *Buddha*.

Temporary material happiness is merely the gratification of some desire. When the desired thing is gained, another desire arises. Insatiate are all desires.

Sorrow is essential to life and cannot be avoided.

Nibbāna, being unconditioned, is eternal (*dhuva*), desirable (*subha*), and happy (*sukha*). The happiness of *nibbāna* should be differentiated from ordinary worldly happiness. Nibbānic bliss grows neither stale nor monotonous. It is a form of happiness that never wearies, never fluctuates. It arises by allaying passions (*vupasama*), unlike the temporary worldly happiness, which results from the gratification of some desire (*vedayita*).

The Ten Grades of Happiness

In the Bahuvedaniya Sutta, the *Buddha* enumerates ten grades of happiness, beginning with the gross material pleasures that result from the pleasant stimulation of the senses. As one ascends higher and higher in the moral plane, the type of happiness becomes ever more exalted, sublime, and subtle, so much so that the world scarcely recognizes it as happiness. In the first *jhāna*, one experiences a transcendental happiness (*sukha*), absolutely independent of the five senses. This happiness is realized by inhibiting the desire for the pleasures of the senses — so highly prized by hedonists and materialists. In the fourth *jhāna*, however, even this type of happiness is discarded as coarse and unprofitable, and its place is taken by the happiness of equanimity (*upekkhā*), which is even more exalted, sublime, and subtle.

The *Buddha* says:[738]

> *"Fivefold, Ānanda, are sensory bonds. What are the five? (1) forms, cognizable by the eye; (2) sounds, cognizable by the ear; (3) odors, cognizable by the nose; (4) flavors, cognizable by the tongue; (5) contacts, cognizable by the body — [all] desirable, lovely, charming, infatuating, accompanied by craving and arousing the dust of the passions. These, Ānanda, are the five sensory bonds. Whatever happiness or pleasure arises from these sensory bonds is known as sensory happiness.*
>
> *"Whosoever should declare: 'This is the highest happiness and pleasure that beings may experience,' I do not grant him that, and why? Because there is another happiness more exalted and sublime.*
>
> *"And what is that other happiness more exalted and sublime? Here, a Bhikkhu lives, completely separated from sensory desires, remote from immoral states, with initial and sustained application born of seclusion, in rapture (pīti) and happiness (sukha), abiding in the First Absorption (paṭhama jhāna). This is happiness more exalted and sublime.*
>
> *"But, should anyone declare: 'This is the highest happiness and pleasure that beings may experience,' I do not grant him that, and why? Because there is another happiness yet more exalted and sublime.*
>
> *"Here, a Bhikkhu, stilling initial and sustained application, having tranquility within, mind one-pointed, initial and sustained application having ceased as a result of concentration, lives in rapture and happiness, abiding in the Second Absorption (dutiya jhāna). This is the other happiness more exalted and sublime.*
>
> *"Yet, should anyone declare that this is the highest happiness and pleasure experienced by beings, I do not grant it. There is happiness more exalted.*

[738] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Gahapativagga, Bahuvedaniya Sutta, no. 59.

"Here, a Bhikkhu, eliminating rapture, abides serene, mindful and completely conscious, experiencing, in the body, that of which the Ariyas say: 'Endowed with equanimity and mindfulness, he abides in happiness.' Thus, he lives, abiding in the Third Absorption (tatiya jhāna). This is the other happiness and pleasure more exalted and sublime.

"Still, should anyone declare that this is the highest happiness, I do not grant it. There is happiness more exalted.

"Here, a Bhikkhu, abandoning pleasure and pain, leaving behind former joy and grief — painless, pleasureless, perfect in equanimity and mindfulness —, lives abiding in the Fourth Absorption (catuttha jhāna). This is the other happiness more exalted and sublime.

"However, were this declared to be the highest happiness, I do not grant it. There is happiness more sublime.

"Here, a Bhikkhu, passing entirely beyond the perception of form, with the disappearance of sense reaction, freed from attention to perceptions of diversity, thinks: 'Infinite is space' and lives abiding in the Realm of Infinite Space (ākāsānañcāyatana). This other happiness is more exalted and sublime.

"Nevertheless, if this were declared to be the highest happiness, I do not grant it. There is happiness more sublime.

"Here, a Bhikkhu, transcending entirely the Realm of Infinite Space, thinks: 'infinite is consciousness,' and lives abiding in the Realm of Infinite Consciousness (viññāṇañcāyatana). This other happiness is more exalted and sublime.

"And, yet, should this be declared to be the highest happiness, I do not grant it. There is higher happiness.

"Here, a Bhikkhu, passing entirely beyond the Realm of Infinite Consciousness, thinks: 'There is nothing whatsoever,' and lives abiding in the Realm of Nothingness (ākiñcaññāyatana). This other happiness is more exalted and sublime.

"And, still, were this declared to be the highest happiness, I do not grant it. There is a happiness more exalted.

"Here, a Bhikkhu, transcending the Realm of Nothingness, lives abiding in the Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-perception (n'eva saññā n'āsaññā-yatana). This other happiness is more exalted and sublime.

"Yet, whosoever should declare: 'This is the highest bliss and pleasure that beings may experience,' I do not grant him that, and why? Because yet another happiness is more exalted and sublime.

"And what is this other happiness more exalted and sublime? Here, a Bhikkhu, utterly transcending the Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-perception, lives, having attained to the Cessation of Perception and Sensation (saññā-vedayita-nirodha). This, Ānanda, is the other happiness more exalted and sublime."

Of all the ten grades of happiness, the last is the highest and the most sublime. This transcendental state is *nirodha samāpati*, that is, experiencing *nibbāna* in this life itself. The absolutely necessary preconditions to attaining this state are perfect mastery of all eight absorptions as well as previous attainment of *Anāgāmī* or Arahantship.

As the *Buddha* Himself has anticipated, one may ask: "How can that state be called the highest happiness when there is no consciousness to experience it?"

The *Buddha* replies:

> *"Nay, disciples, the Tathāgata does not recognize bliss merely because of a pleasurable sensation, but, disciples, wherever bliss is attained, there and there only does the Accomplished One recognize bliss."*[739]

The *Buddha* proclaimed that everything experienced by the senses is sorrowful — but why? Because one in sorrow craves to be happy, and the so-called "happy" crave to be still happier. So insatiate is worldly happiness.

In conventional terms, the *Buddha* declares: *nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ* "*nibbāna* is the highest bliss." It is bliss supreme because it is not a kind of happiness experienced by the senses. It is a blissful state of positive relief from the ills of life.

The very fact of the cessation of suffering is ordinarily termed "happiness," though this word does not fully describe its real nature.

What is Nibbāna?

In the *Milindapañha*, Venerable Nāgasena describes *nibbāna* as follows:

> *"There is no place looking east, south, west, or north, above, below, or beyond, where nibbāna is to be found, and yet nibbāna is, and he who orders his life rightly, grounded in virtue and, with rational attention, may realize it, whether one lives in Greece, China, Alexandria, or Kosala.*
>
> *"Just as fire is not stored up in any particular place but arises when the necessary conditions exist, so nibbāna is said not to exist in a particular place, but it is attained when the necessary conditions are fulfilled."*

In the Rohitassa Sutta,[740] the *Buddha* States:

> *"In this very fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and thoughts, do I proclaim the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world."*

[739] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Gahapativagga, Bahuvedaniya Sutta, no. 59.
[740] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*; *Anguttara Nikāya*.

Here, "world" means suffering. The cessation of the world, therefore, means the cessation of suffering, which is *nibbāna*.

Attaining *nibbāna* is dependent upon this fathom-long body. It is not something that is created, nor is it something to be created. According to the *Visuddhimagga*, *nibbāna* is to be attained, or realized, by means of the four Paths of Sainthood and is not to be produced.

Nibbāna is there where the four elements of cohesion (*āpo*), extension (*paṭhavī*), heat (*tejo*), and motion (*vāyo*) find no footing.

In the *Udāna* (Udānapāḷi 5, Soṇavaggo — 5, Uposathasuttaṁ), the *Buddha* states:

> *"Just as, O Bhikkhus, notwithstanding those rivers that reach the great ocean and the torrents of rain that fall from the sky, neither a deficit nor a surplus is perceptible in the great ocean, even so, despite the many Bhikkhus that enter the remainderless parinibbāna, there is neither a deficit nor a surplus in the element of nibbāna."*

Nibbāna is, therefore, not a kind of heaven where a transcendental ego resides but a *dhamma* (an attainment) which is within the reach of us all.

An eternal heaven, as conceived in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, for example, which provides all forms of pleasure desired by man and where one enjoys happiness to one's heart's content, is, for all practical purposes, impossible. It is absolutely erroneous to think that such a place could exist permanently anywhere.

Granting that there is no place where *nibbāna* is stored up, King Milinda questions Venerable Nāgasena whether there is any basis whereon a man might stand and, ordering his life aright, realize *nibbāna*:

> *"Yes, O King, there is such a basis."*
>
> *"What, then, Venerable Nāgasena is that basis?"*
>
> *"Virtue, O King, is that basis. For, if grounded in virtue and careful in attention, whether in the land of the Scythians or the Greeks, whether in China or Tartary, whether in Alexandria or in Nikumba, whether in Benares or in Kosala, whether in Kashmir or Gandhara, whether on a mountain top or in the highest heavens, wherever he may be, the man who orders his life aright will attain nibbāna."*[741]

Who Attains Nibbāna?

This question must necessarily be set aside as irrelevant. For Buddhism denies the existence of a permanent entity or an immortal soul. The so-called "being," which is often referred to as the "vestment of the soul," is a mere collection of conditioned factors.

[741] *Milindapañha*.

That which we call a "chariot," for example, has no existence apart from and independent of axle, wheels, shaft, etc. That which we call a "house" is merely a convenient name for bricks, wood, plaster, paint, pipes, electrical wires, etc. put together after a certain manner, so as to enclose a portion of space, but there is no separate house-entity as such in existence.

In exactly the same way, that which we call a "being," or an "individual," or a "person," or by the pronouns "I," or "he," or the like, is nothing but a constantly changing combination of physical and mental phenomena and has no real existence in and of itself.

Instead of an eternal soul or an illusory "I," Buddhism posits a dynamic life-flux (*santati*) which flows *ad infinitum* as long as it is fed with ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*). When these two root causes are eradicated by any individual on attaining Arahantship, they cease to flow with his final death.

In conventional terms, one says that the *Arahant* has attained *parinibbāna*, or passed away into *nibbāna*. Since, in the ultimate sense, however, there is no such thing as a permanent self, soul, or ego-entity, one cannot properly speak of the death of such a thing. What we are dealing with here is simply a psychophysical process that is cut off at death.

Therefore, it is said in the *Visuddhimagga* (Chapter XIX):

> *Everywhere, in all the realms of existence, the noble disciple sees only mental and corporeal phenomena kept going through the concatenation of causes and effects. No producer of the volitional act, or kamma, does he see apart from the deed, no recipient of the kamma-result apart from the result. Moreover, he is well aware that wise men are merely using conventional language, when, with regard to a karmic act, they speak of a doer, or with regard to a kamma-result, they speak of the recipient of the result.*
>
> *No doer of the deeds is found,*
> *No one who ever reaps their fruits;*
> *Empty phenomena roll on:*
> *This, alone, is the correct view.*
>
> *And, while the deeds and their results*
> *Roll on and on, conditioned all,*
> *There is no first cause to be found,*
> *Just as it is with seed and tree ...*
>
> *No God, no Brahmā, can be called*
> *The creator of this wheel of life:*
> *Empty phenomena roll on,*
> *Dependent upon conditions all.*

The chief difference between the Buddhist conception of *nibbāna* and the Hindu conception of *nirvāṇa*, or *mukti*, lies in the fact that Buddhists view their goal without an eternal soul and creator, while Hindus do believe in an eternal soul (*ātman*[742]) and a creator. This is the reason why Buddhism can neither be called Eternalism nor Nihilism. In *nibbāna*, nothing is eternalized nor is anything annihilated.

Concluding Remarks

It must be admitted that this question of *nibbāna* is one of the most difficult in the Teaching of the *Buddha*. However much we may speculate, we shall never be in a position to comprehend its real nature. The best way to understand *nibbāna* is to try to realize it with our own intuitive knowledge.

Although *nibbāna* cannot be perceived by the five senses and lies in obscurity so far as the average man is concerned, the only straight path that leads to *nibbāna* has been explained by the *Buddha*, with all the necessary details, and is laid open to all. The goal may now be clouded, but the method of achievement is perfectly clear, and, when that achievement is realized, the goal is as clear as the moon when it appears from behind the clouds. ■

[742] Pāḷi *attā*.

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The Way to Nibbāna

"This Middle Path leads to tranquility, realization, enlightenment, and nibbāna."[743]

The Middle Path

The way to *nibbāna* is this Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) that avoids the extreme of self-mortification, which weakens the intellect, and the extreme of self-indulgence, which retards moral progress.

This Middle Path consists of the following eight factors:[744]

1. Right Understanding (*sammā diṭṭhi*);
2. Right Thought (*sammā saṁkappa*);
3. Right Speech (*sammā vācā*);
4. Right Action (*sammā kammanta*);
5. Right Livelihood (*sammā ājīva*);
6. Right Effort (*sammā vāyāma*);
7. Right Mindfulness (*sammā sati*);
8. Right Concentration (*sammā samādhi*).

The first two factors are classified as Wisdom (*paññā*), the second three as Morality (*sīla*), and the last three as Concentration (*samādhi*).

According to the order of development, Morality, Concentration, and Wisdom are the three stages of the path that leads to *nibbāna*.

The three stages are embodied in the beautiful ancient verse:

"Avoid all evil, cultivate the good,[745] *purify your mind: this sums up the teaching of the Buddhas."*[746]

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[743] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Sacca, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.

[744] The Noble Eightfold Path is discussed in detail in Chapter 22.

[745] By "evil" is meant that which is associated with the roots of attachment, ill will, and delusion; by "good" is meant that which is associated with their opposites: generosity, goodwill, and wisdom.

[746] *Dhammapada*, XIV, The Buddha, verse 183.

Good and Evil

We reap what we sow. Evil results in pain, and good in happiness. Our pain and happiness are the direct results of our own good and evil thoughts, speech, and actions.

A person with right understanding realizes this just law of action and reaction and, of his own accord, refrains from evil and does good to the best of his ability. He does so for his own good as well as the good of others. He considers it his duty to live as a blessing both to himself and to all other beings.

Knowing that life is precious to all and that none has any right whatsoever to destroy the life of another, he extends compassion and loving-kindness towards every sentient being and refrains from killing or causing injury to any living being.

There is no rule that one is to be preyed upon or abused by another. However, in nature, the strong prey upon the weak and feast on their flesh in order to sustain themselves. This is mere animal instinct. Such actions by animals can be excused, because they do not know what they are doing, but, when those who are gifted with reason and understanding perpetrate such crimes, there is no excuse. Whether to satisfy one's palate or as a pastime, it is not justifiable to kill or cause another living being to be killed. If the killing of animals is wrong, how much more heinous it is to kill a human being — either individually or collectively, employing brutal or so-called "civilized" methods — for the sake of peace, religion, or any other allegedly "good" purpose.

Honesty, trustworthiness, and uprightness are the characteristics of a person with right understanding. Such a person tries to abstain from all forms of stealing, whether in its dissembled or obvious forms. Abstaining from sexual misconduct, which debases the exalted nature of man, he tries to be pure and chaste. He avoids false speech, vulgar speech, harsh language, slander, and frivolous talk and speaks only what is true, sweet, kind, and helpful. Inasmuch as certain beverages and drugs promote heedlessness and mental distraction, he avoids intoxicating drinks and cultivates mindfulness and clarity of vision.

These elementary principles of regulated behavior are essential to one who treads the Path to *nibbāna*, chiefly because they tend to control both deeds and words. Violation of them introduces obstacles that hinder his moral progress on the Path, while observance of them means smooth and steady progress along the Path.

Controlling the Senses

Having progressed a step further in his gradual advance, the aspirant now tries to control his senses. To control craving for food and to promote buoyancy of mind and body, abstinence from food, or fasting, at least once a month is advisable. Plain and simple living is preferable to a luxurious life, which makes one a slave to one's possessions. A life of celibacy is recommended, inasmuch as one's valuable energy, thus conserved, can then be utilized wholly for the intellectual and moral welfare of oneself and others. In such a life, one is detached from additional worldly bonds that impede

moral progress. Many of the great spiritual teachers have nourished their bodies sparingly and have led a life of strict celibacy, simplicity, voluntary poverty, and self-control.

Renunciation

While he progresses slowly and steadily, with regulated word and deed and sense-restraint, the karmic force of the striving aspirant compels him to renounce worldly pleasures and to adopt the ascetic life. The idea then arises in him:

> *"A den of strife is household life,*
> *And filled with toil and need.*
> *But free and high as the open sky*
> *Is the life the homeless lead."*[747]

Thus realizing the vanity of sensory pleasures, one voluntarily forsakes all earthly possessions and, donning the ascetic garb, tries to lead the Holy Life (*brahmacariya*) in all its purity. It is not, however, the external appearance that makes one holy, but internal purification and an exemplary life.

> *"Though one may put on the saffron-colored robe, if one has not removed impurities from the mind,*[748] *if one is lacking in self-discipline and truthfulness, then, such a one is not worthy of wearing the saffron-colored robe.*
>
> *"Whoever has purified the mind, who is firmly established in moral behavior, who possesses self-discipline and truthfulness, that one is indeed worthy of wearing the saffron-colored robe."*[749]

Transformation must come from within, not from without. It is not absolutely necessary to retire to solitude and lead the life of an ascetic to realize *nibbāna*. The life of a *Bhikkhu*, however, expedites and facilitates spiritual progress, but, even as a layman, Sainthood may be attained.

One who attains Arahantship as a layman, in the face of all the temptations found in lay life, is certainly more praiseworthy than a *Bhikkhu* who attains Arahantship living amidst surroundings that are not distracting.

Concerning a government minister who attained Arahantship while seated on an elephant decked out in his best apparel, the *Buddha* remarked:

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[747] *Sutta Nipāta*, Mahāvagga, Pabbajjā Sutta, verse 406.

[748] There is a play on words in this verse. *Anikkasāva* means "free from the impurities of lust," while *kāsāva* means "saffron-colored robe," which is the mark of asceticism. External appearance of the Holy Life is useless without internal purity. On another occasion, the *Buddha* said that a pure person is indeed an ideal recluse, regardless of his external apparel.

[749] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verses 9—10.

> *"But those whose mind is serene, who are free from moral defilements, who have their senses controlled, who are established in Path Insight,*[750] *who are perfectly pure,*[751] *and who have laid aside violence towards all beings*[752] *— these are true brāhmaṇas, true ascetics, true monks,*[753] *even if they wear fine clothes."*[754]

There have been several such instances of laymen who realized *nibbāna* without renouncing the world. The most devout and generous lay follower, Anāthapiṇḍika, was a *Sotāpanna*,[755] the Sākya Mahānāma was a *Sakadāgāmī*,[756] the potter Ghaṭīkāra was an *Anāgāmī*,[757] and the *Buddha's* father, King Suddhodana, died as an *Arahant*.[758]

Morality

A *Bhikkhu* is expected to observe four kinds of Higher Morality, namely:

1. *Pātimokkha sīla*: the fundamental moral code;[759]
2. *Indriyasaṁvara sīla*: morality pertaining to sense-restraint;
3. *Ājīvapārisuddhi sīla*: morality pertaining to purity of livelihood;
4. *Paccayasannissita sīla*: morality pertaining to the use of the necessities of life.

These four kinds of morality are collectively called *sīla-visuddhi* (Purity of Virtue), the first of the seven stages of Purification on the way to *nibbāna*.

When a person enters the Order and receives his Higher Ordination (*upasampadā*), he is called a *Bhikkhu*. There is no English equivalent that exactly conveys the meaning of this Pāḷi term. "Mendicant Monk" may be suggested as the nearest translation, not in the sense of one who begs but in the sense of one who lives on alms.

No one is forced to become a *Bhikkhu*. One becomes a *Bhikkhu* of one's own accord in order to lead the Holy Life for as long as one likes. One is at liberty to leave the Order at any time.

A *Bhikkhu* is bound to observe 227 rules. The four major rules that deal with perfect celibacy, stealing, murder, and false claims to higher spiritual powers, must be strictly observed. If he violates any one of these four rules, he becomes "defeated"

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[750] The four stages of Sainthood (the four Paths) are: (1) Stream-Winner (*Sotāpanna*); (2) Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmī*); (3) Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*); and *Arahat* "Worthy One" (*Arahatta*).
[751] In their conduct.
[752] Absolutely harmless to all in thought, word, and deed.
[753] Because they have overcome all impurities, all passions.
[754] *Dhammapada*, X, Punishment, verse 142.
[755] "Stream-Winner," the first stage of Sainthood.
[756] "Once-Returner," the second stage of Sainthood.
[757] "Non-Returner," the third stage of Sainthood.
[758] "Worthy One," the final stage of Sainthood.
[759] The 227 rules that a *Bhikkhu* is expected to observe. *Bhikkhunīs* must observe an additional set of rules.

(*pārājikā*) and automatically ceases to be a *Bhikkhu*. If he wishes, he can re-enter the Order and remain as a *sāmaṇera* (Novice). If he violates any of the other rules, he has to make amends according to the severity of the offense.

Among the salient characteristics of a *Bhikkhu* are purity, perfect celibacy, voluntary poverty, humility, simplicity, selfless service, self-control, patience, compassion, and harmlessness.

The life of a *Bhikkhu*, or, in other words, the renunciation of worldly pleasures and ambitions, is only an effective means to attain *nibbāna* and is not an end in itself.

The Progressive Training

There is an instructive story in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (Gaṇaka Moggallāna Sutta, no. 107) about a Brahmin accountant named Gaṇaka Moggallāna who went to see the *Buddha* when He was staying near Sāvatthī in the monastery built for Him by Visākhā. Gaṇaka Moggallāna had a question to ask. He pointed out first that, in this life, many things were done gradually, step by step. "Is it not possible," he then asked the *Buddha*, "to lay out a similar gradual training, gradual activities, a gradual practice with regard to this Doctrine and Discipline of yours?" The *Buddha* answered that it was possible, and explained the various steps to be taken when training in the *Dhamma*.

> *One day, a Brahmin accountant came to the Master at East Park, saluted Him with courteous greeting, and said: "As I approached this storied monastery, Reverend Gotama, I got a gradual view of it. Now, Reverend Gotama, just as, in a course of archery, the training of the archers is a progressive one, so also, with us Brahmins, our theological training is gradual, the approach is step by step. Is it possible, Reverend Gotama, for this Dhamma and discipline of Yours to be likewise taught progressively?"*
>
> *"It is so, Brahmin," replied the Buddha. "Take the case of a clever horse trainer. He takes a thoroughbred in hand, gives him his first lesson with bit and bridle, and then proceeds with a further step. In exactly the same way, Brahmin, the Tathāgata takes in hand a man to be trained and gives him his first lesson, thus: 'Come, brother! Be kind and harmless. Live self-restrained by the restraint of the Precepts. Become versed in the practice of good conduct. Seeing danger in trifling faults, undertake the training and become a pupil in the moralities.'*
>
> *"As soon as he has mastered all that," Sākyamuni continued, "the Tathāgata gives him his second lesson, thus: 'Come, brother! Seeing an object with the eye, do not become captivated by its general appearance or by its details. Persist in overcoming that wretched dejection caused by craving, caused by an uncontrolled sense of sight — those evil states that could overwhelm one like a flood. Guard the sense of sight, win control over the sense of sight, and do the same with the other faculties of sense. When you hear a sound with the ear, smell*

an odor with the nose, taste a flavor with the tongue, or, with body, touch a tangible thing, or when, with mind, you are conscious of a thing, do not become captivated by objects of sense.'

"As soon as he has mastered all that, the Tathāgata gives him a further lesson, thus: 'Come, brother! Use moderation in eating. Do not eat thoughtlessly, do not eat for the enjoyment of it, or as a luxury, or for making your body beautiful, but eat to keep yourself alive and in good health, free from sickness, and for strength and energy to pursue the Holy Life with this thought, I check my former feeling. I will allow no new feeling to arise, that maintenance and comfort may be mine.'

"Then, Brahmin, when he has won restraint in food, the Tathāgata gives him a further lesson, thus: 'Come, brother! Abide alert. By day and night, when walking, sitting, or lying down — in everything you do — be attentive and self-possessed, and cleanse your heart from things which may hinder you.'

"Then, Brahmin, when he is devoted to alertness, the Tathāgata gives him a further lesson, thus: 'Come, brother! Be possessed of mindfulness and self-control. In going forth and going back, have yourself under control. In looking forward or looking behind, in bending or relaxing, in wearing robes or carrying bowl and robe, in eating, chewing, tasting, in relieving yourself, in walking, standing, sitting, lying, in sleeping or waking, in speaking or keeping silence, have yourself under control.'

"Then, Brahmin, when he is possessed of mindfulness and self-control, the Tathāgata gives him a further lesson, thus: 'Come, brother! Seek out a secluded lodging, the root of a tree in a grove, a mountain, a cave or mountain grotto, a cemetery, a forest retreat, a heap of straw in the open air.' And he does so. And, when he has eaten his food, he sits down cross-legged, and, keeping his body straight, he proceeds to practice meditation in order to attain the Absorptions.

"Now, Brahmin, for all monks who are pupils (sekha), who have not yet attained mastery of mind, who abide aspiring for the unsurpassed security of nibbāna, such is the method for my course of training.

"But, as to those monks who are Arahants, who have destroyed the poisons of lust, existence-infatuation, false view, and ignorance, who have lived the Holy Life, done their task, laid down the burden, won salvation, utterly destroyed the unwholesome roots of greed, hatred, and delusion, and are released by perfect Insight — for such as those, these things are conducive to comfort in the present life and to mindful self-control as well." ■

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Meditation: Training the Mind[760]

"Meditating earnestly[761] *and striving for nibbāna, the wise attain the highest joy and freedom."*[762]

The Threefold Training

The whole of the *Buddha's* Teaching may be summed up in three words: morality (*sīla*), mental concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). This is the threefold division of the Noble Eightfold Path leading to deliverance from the suffering of *saṁsāra* (the endless cycle of life, death, and rebirth). Of this Eightfold Path, Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood are included in morality; Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration are included in mental concentration; and Right Understanding and Right Thought are included in wisdom.

Of these three divisions, morality constitutes the foundation without which no real progress along the Eightfold Path to purity and deliverance is possible. The two higher stages, concentration and wisdom, are brought to perfection through the practice of "meditation," which is the usual, though somewhat inaccurate, translation of the Buddhist Pāḷi term *bhāvanā*.

Mental Development

The word *bhāvanā* is a verbal noun derived from the causative of the verb *bhavati* "to be, to become" and, therefore, literally means "bringing into existence," that is, "producing, development," or, more specifically, "mental development." Now, this mental development is twofold:

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[760] This chapter is adapted from a lecture given in Tokyo, Japan, in 1920 by Nyanatiloka Mahāthera entitled "Mental Culture" and published as part of *Fundamentals of Buddhism: Four Lectures* (= The Wheel Publication no. 394/396) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1994]), pp. 58—76, and from Paravahera Vajrañāna Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice* (3rd edition; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society [1987]).

[761] Here, meditation includes both calm-abiding (*samatha*) and contemplation, or insight (*vipassanā*).

[762] *Dhammapada*, II, Heedfulness, verse 23.

1. Development of tranquility (that is, calm-abiding, serenity) (*samatha bhāvanā*), which aims at mental concentration (*samādhi*[763]) — this is sometimes called "stabilizing meditation." *Samatha* is actually the mind resting one-pointedly on a meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) so that it becomes stable and calm. The purpose of developing one-pointed attention is to slow down the flow of thoughts. The mind cannot focus on something when it is distracted by thoughts, that is, when it is swept away or becomes attached to thoughts. If the mind can focus one-pointedly without being distracted, one has achieved *samatha*. Thus, *samatha* is not a state of "no thought" but, rather, a state of "non-distraction." The mind becomes so relaxed that it rests in itself, just as it is, undistracted by thoughts.

2. Development of insight (*vipassanā bhāvanā*), which aims at understanding, or wisdom (*paññā*) — this is sometimes called "analytical meditation." When the mind becomes very calm and stable, it can distinguish and discriminate very clearly between all phenomena and see everything as very distinct. This ability to see all things clearly just as they are is called *vipassanā*, or insight. *Vipassanā* is developed through *samatha*.

Though the concentration exercises may serve various preliminary purposes, their ultimate objective is to reach that unshakable tranquility and purity of mind that is the essential condition for the development of insight leading to deliverance from the cycle of rebirth and suffering (*saṁsāra*). The *Buddha* has said:

> *"Now what, monks, is nibbāna? It is the extinction of greed (lobha), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha). And what, monks, is the path leading to nibbāna? It is mental tranquility and insight."*

Mental tranquility (*samatha*) is the unshakable state of mind gained through persevering in mental concentration. Tranquility bestows a threefold blessing: auspicious rebirth, bliss in this very life, and mental purity and fitness for insight.

Insight (*vipassanā*) is the direct and penetrative realization of the three characteristics of existence, that is, the impermanency (*anicca*), suffering nature (*dukkha*), and egolessness (*anattā*) of the five aggregates (material form [corporeality, matter], feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness). It is not a mere intellectual appreciation or conceptual knowledge of these truths, but an indubitable and unshakable personal experience of them, obtained and matured through repeated meditative confrontation with the facts underlying those truths. It is the intrinsic nature of insight that it produces a growing detachment and an increasing freedom from craving,

[763] *Samādhi* is one-pointedness of the mind. It is concentration of the mind on one subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*) to the complete exclusion of everything else. Concentration is one of the seven Factors of Enlightenment, one of the five Spiritual Faculties and Powers, and the last link in the Noble Eightfold Path. In the threefold division of the Eightfold Path (morality, concentration, and wisdom), it is a collective name for the last three links of the path.

culminating in the final deliverance of the mind from all that causes its enslavement to the world of suffering. It is the nature of insight to be free from desire (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) and to see clearly all things in the inner and outer world as bare phenomena, that is, as impersonal processes.

Development of Samādhi and Samatha (Concentration and Tranquility)

There exist many different exercises for the development of concentration (*samādhi*) and mental tranquility (*samatha*). In the *Visuddhimagga* (III—XI), forty such concentration exercises (*kammaṭṭhāna*) are enumerated and minutely explained, namely:

1. Ten *kasiṇa*[764] exercises: the elements earth, water, fire, and wind; the colors blue, yellow, red, and white; and space and light;
2. Ten cemetery meditations;
3. Ten reflections: on the qualities of the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha*; on morality, liberality, and celestial beings; on death, the body, in-and-out breathing, and the peace of detachment;
4. The development of the four divine abodes[765] (*brahmavihāra*): loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*);
5. The attainment of the four immaterial absorptions (*jhānas*);
6. The perception of the filthiness of food; and
7. The analysis of the four elements.

Suitability of Subjects for Different Temperaments

According to the scriptures, the ten cemetery meditations (*sīvathikā*) and the mindfulness regarding the body, such as the thirty-two body parts, are suitable for those of a lustful temperament, because they tend to create disgust for the body.

The four divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*) and the four color *kasiṇas* are suitable for those of a hateful temperament.

The Reflections on the *Buddha* and so forth are suitable for those of a devout temperament. The Reflections on Death and Peace, Perception of the Filthiness of Food, and Analysis of the four Elements are suitable for those of an intellectual temperament. The remaining subjects, chiefly, Reflection on the *Buddha*, Meditation on Loving-Kindness, Mindfulness regarding the Body, and Reflection on Death, are suitable for all, regardless of temperament.

A physical object like a *kasiṇa* circle can aid concentration. But a virtue like

[764] *Kasiṇa* here means "whole, all, complete" — specifically, it refers to the so-called "total fields" that serve as supports for the concentration of the mind. It is so called because the projected light issuing from the conceptualized image of the *kasiṇa* object could be extended everywhere without limitation.
[765] Also called the "Four Illimitables."

loving-kindness has the specific advantage of building up that particular virtue in the character of the person.

There are six kinds of temperaments (*carita*) — they are:

1. Lustful temperament (*rāgacarita*);
2. Hateful temperament (*dosacarita*);
3. Ignorant temperament (*mohacarita*);
4. Devout temperament (*saddhācarita*);
5. Intellectual temperament (*buddhicarita*);
6. Discursive temperament (*vitakkacarita*).

Carita signifies the intrinsic nature of a person that is revealed when one is in a normal state without being preoccupied with anything. The temperaments of people differ owing to the diversity of their actions, or *kamma*. Habitual actions tend to form particular temperaments.

Rāga, or lust, is predominant in some, while *dosa*, or anger, hatred, ill will, is predominant in others. Most people belong to these two categories. There are a few who lack intelligence and are more or less ignorant, dull-witted, or stupid (*mohacarita*). Related to ignorant are those whose minds vacillate, unable to focus their attention deliberately on one thing (*vitakkacarita*). By nature, some are exceptionally devout (*saddhācarita*), while others are exceptionally intelligent (*buddhicarita*).

Combining these six with one another, we get sixty-three types. With the inclusion of speculative temperament (*diṭṭhicarita*), there are sixty-four types. The subjects of meditation are variously adapted to these different temperaments and types of people.

Levels of Concentration

Before entering into a discussion of some of these forty concentration exercises, it is necessary to deal with the three levels of intensity of concentration and, further, to speak of those refined states of mind called "mental absorptions" (*jhānas*), which may be attained through a great number of these exercises.

The three levels of concentration are:

1. Preliminary concentration (*parikamma-samādhi*);
2. Neighborhood concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*);
3. Attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhi*).

Preliminary concentration is present whenever one directs one's mind to any of the various subjects of concentration.

Neighborhood concentration (also called "access concentration") is that level of concentration that approaches, or comes near to, the first *jhāna* and is, in many exercises,

marked by a mentally visible pure and stable mental image, the so-called "reflex sign" (*nimitta*, that is, "sign," "mark," "mentally created distinction").

Attainment concentration is that level of concentration which is present during the *jhānas*. The *jhānas* are suprasensual states of perfect mental absorption, in which the activity of the five senses (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling) is suspended. The *jhānas* can only be attained in absolute solitude and by unremitting perseverance in the development of concentration (*samādhi*). No visible or audible impressions arise at such a time, and no bodily feeling is felt. In this state, the practitioner appears to the outside world as if dead. But, though all of the outer sense impressions, such as seeing, hearing, etc., have disappeared, the mind still remains active, perfectly alert, and fully awake.

The Mental Absorptions (Jhānas)

1. The first *jhāna* is a state of peace, ecstasy, and joyful bliss, yet conceptual thought and discursive thinking (*vitakka-vicāra*), that is, the so-called "inner speech" or "verbal activity of the mind" (*vacī-saṁkhāra*), are still at work.

2. The second *jhāna* is attained as soon as this verbal activity of the mind has ceased. One then experiences a state of peace, ecstasy (also called "rapture," or "zest") (*pīti*), and joyful bliss, free from conceptual thought and discursive thinking.

3. The third *jhāna* is attained upon the fading away of ecstasy and joyful bliss. One then experiences "equanimous joy" or "equanimous happiness" (*upekkhā-sukha*).

4. The fourth *jhāna* is attained upon the fading away of happiness (*sukha*), leaving one in a state of perfect equanimity (*upekkhā*).

After emerging from the fourth *jhāna*, the mind is serene, pure, lucid, stainless, devoid of evil, pliable, able to act, firm, and imperturbable.

The first four mental absorptions are called the Fine-Material Absorptions (*rūpa jhānas*). These are followed by four Immaterial Absorptions (*arūpa jhānas*):

5. Through having completely transcended all perceptions in the fine-material sphere, and through the vanishing of sense-perceptions, rising above the idea of multiform phenomena, at the idea "space is boundless," one attains and abides in the Sphere of Boundless Space.

6. Through having completely transcended the Sphere of Boundless Space, at the idea "consciousness is infinite," one attains and abides in the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness.

7. Through having completely transcended the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness, at the

idea "nothing really exists," one attains and abides in the Sphere of Nothingness.

8. Through having completely transcended the Sphere of Nothingness, one attains and abides in the Sphere of Neither Perception nor Non-perception.

Concentration Exercises

Let us now deal separately with some of the concentration exercises.

THE TEN KASIṆA EXERCISES: Among the forty exercises described in the *Visuddhi-magga*, the ten *kasiṇa* exercises resemble, somewhat, certain methods used to induce hypnotic trance by fixing one's gaze at bright objects. Therefore, in order to avoid entering into a hypnotic state, we must be wary of sleepiness and strive to keep the mind fully focused and alert.

There are four color *kasiṇas*, four element *kasiṇas*, a space *kasiṇa*, and a light *kasiṇa*. In the color *kasiṇa* exercise, a blue, yellow, red, or white disk may serve as the object upon which to gaze, or flowers, cloth, etc. of these colors may be used. In the earth *kasiṇa* exercise, the object of gazing may be a plowed field seen from a distance or a circular piece of earth prepared for this purpose. In the water *kasiṇa* exercise, the object of gazing may be a pond seen from a higher elevation or water contained in a vessel. Likewise with the fire *kasiṇa* and wind *kasiṇa* exercises.

As an example of how to practice, let us consider the blue *kasiṇa* exercise. First, we prepare a round disk made of blue paper or cloth and attach it to the wall of the meditation room. Then, seated before the disk, we focus our whole attention upon this "preliminary sign" (*parikamma-nimitta*) and so produce "preliminary concentration" (*parikamma-samādhi*). While constantly gazing at this blue disk, we must strive to remain mentally alert and steadfast in order to avoid falling into hypnotic trance. At the same time, we must keep our mind free from all outside impressions, from thoughts about other objects, and from any disturbing mental visions or hallucinations that may arise. As we continue to fix our eyes and thoughts exclusively upon the blue disk, the things around the disk will seem to disappear, and the disk itself will seem more and more to become a mental mirage. Then, regardless of whether the eyes remain open or closed, we perceive a mental image of the disk, which more and more assumes the appearance of a bright orb like the moon. This is the "acquired sign" (*uggaha-nimitta*), which, though apparently seen by means of our physical eyes, is, nevertheless, produced and perceived only by our mind, independently of the sense activity of the eyes. As soon as this mentally produced image becomes steady and no longer vanishes, but remains safely fixed in the mind, we should (according to the *Visuddhimagga*) get up and move to another place away from the physical blue disk and continue our exercise there. In fixing our mind more and more upon the mentally produced image, it becomes continually steadier and brighter, until, at last, it assumes the appearance of a bright morning star or something similar. When this happens, the "reflex image" (also called "counterpart sign"

or "counterpart image") (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) is attained and, along with it, "neighborhood concentration" (also called "access concentration") (*upacāra-samādhi*).

Already during this stage, all mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) have, at least temporarily, disappeared and do not arise. No sensual lust (*kāmacchanda*) arises in such a state. No ill will (*vyāpāda*) can irritate the mind. All mental stiffness and dullness (*thīna-middha*) is overcome. No restlessness and anxiety (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) and no wavering doubt and skepticism (*vicikicchā*) can divert the mind any more. As long as there is a possibility for the arising of these five mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), there can be no lasting tranquility of the mind. By tenaciously focusing our mind on the reflex sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*), we eventually reach attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhi*) and, thereby, enter into the first *jhāna*. And, by becoming more and more absorbed, and by the gradual vanishing, one by one, of conceptual thoughts and discursive thinking and then of rapture (*pīti*) and joy (*sukha*), we pass through the three remaining *jhānas*, one after the other.

THE TEN CEMETERY CONTEMPLATIONS: Next, let us touch upon the ten "cemetery contemplations"[766] (*sīvathikā*). The goal of these exercises is to create a concentrated and tranquil state of mind by arousing disgust for the carnal desires and detachment from them. The subjects of cemetery contemplations, being either real or imaginary, are as follows:

1. A swollen corpse (*uddhumātaka*);
2. A discolored corpse (*vinīlaka*);
3. A festering corpse (*vipubbaka*);
4. A dissected corpse (*vicchiddaka*);
5. A corpse gnawed to pieces (*vikkhāyitaka*);
6. A corpse scattered in pieces (*vikkhittaka*);
7. A corpse mutilated and scattered in pieces (*hata-vikkhittaka*);
8. A bloody corpse (*lohitaka*);
9. A worm-infested corpse (*pulapaka*); and
10. A skeleton (*aṭṭhika*).[767]

The swollen corpse, in particular, as exemplifying the decay of the form of the body, is suitable for those who lust after the beauty of the body.

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[766] Also called the "meditation subjects of impurity" (*asubha kammaṭṭhāna*), or, simply, the "Impurities." According to the scriptures, the practice of the cemetery contemplations is exclusively Buddhist, and, inasmuch as it occurs in the *Vinaya* in connection with the third *pārājika* rule, it must have been introduced during the very early period of the Teaching. The loathsomeness of the body was widely recognized among the sages of India, but this method of meditating upon a dead body has not yet been found in any Indian system other than Buddhism. The practice is recommended for those of a lustful disposition.

[767] These ten kinds of corpses were found in ancient cemeteries and charnel grounds, where dead bodies were not buried or cremated and where flesh-eating animals and birds frequented. In modern times, it is no longer possible to obtain such corpses as subjects of meditation.

The discolored corpse, clearly showing the decayed beauty of the skin, is suitable for one who lusts after beauty of the skin and complexion.

The festering corpse, with a stench issuing from sores on the body, is suitable for one who lusts after a sweet-smelling body, produced by such artificial means as flowers, perfumes, and unguents.

The dissected corpse, demonstrating the existence of various cavities within the body, is suitable for one who lusts after the apparent firmness and solidity of the body.

The corpse gnawed to pieces, portraying the destruction of the perfection and fullness of the flesh, is suitable for one who lusts after fullness of the flesh in such parts of the body as the breasts.

The corpse scattered in pieces is suitable for one who lusts after graceful movements of the body.

The corpse mutilated and scattered in pieces is suitable for one who lusts after the perfection of the joints of the body.

The bloody corpse, showing the repulsiveness of a body besmeared with blood, is suitable for one who lusts after beauty produced by adornments.

The corpse infested with worms, illustrating the state of a body swarming with various kinds of worms, is suitable for one who lusts after the idea that the body is "I" or "mine."

The skeleton, expressing the gruesomeness of the bones of the body, is suitable for one who lusts after perfection of teeth and nails.

THE FOUR DIVINE ABODES: Finally, let us take a look at the four "divine abodes" (*brahmavihāra*):

1. Loving-kindness (*mettā*);
2. Compassion (*karuṇā*);
3. Sympathetic joy (*muditā*); and
4. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the development of loving-kindness (*mettā*) is to be practiced as follows:

First, one should think of oneself: "May I be happy. May I be free from suffering." Thus, beginning with oneself, one should then, in the same way, extend loving and benevolent thoughts to one's teacher, then, to one's friends and companions, then, to all persons living in and around the same house, then, to the inhabitants of the nearest street, then, to the whole village, town, or city, and, then, to the whole country; in so doing, one should not make the slightest differentiation between friend and enemy, blood relation and stranger, good people and bad people — one should pervade the whole world with all-embracing loving-kindness. And not only human beings, but also animals, down to the tiniest insects — all should be embraced with loving-kindness. Identifying ourselves with all that lives, we should pervade the whole world with all-embracing loving-kindness, above, below, to all sides, and should rouse, in our innermost heart, the

fervent wish: "May all beings be happy. May they be free from greed, hatred, and delusion. May they find deliverance from *saṁsāra*."

By developing all-embracing loving-kindness and goodwill, the heart will become purified of ill-feeling and anger and will be filled with tranquility, steadfastness, and peace. During this exercise, the mind may eventually reach the ecstasy of the first *jhāna* and gradually even pass through the first three *jhānas*. In a more or less similar way, compassion (*karuṇā*) and sympathetic joy (*muditā*) are developed. In the *suttas*, we find, again and again, the stereotypical words:

> *"There, O monks, the monk pervades first one direction, then the second, then the third, then the fourth, above, below, round about, in every quarter, with all-embracing loving-kindness, or with compassion, or with sympathetic joy, or with equanimity. And, identifying himself with all [sentient beings], he pervades the entire universe with all-embracing loving-kindness, with heart grown great, wide, deep, boundless, free from hatred and anger ..."*

In the fourth *jhāna*, the "development of equanimity" (*upekkhā-bhāvanā*) *jhāna*, all persons and things are regarded with perfect equanimity and detachment. With unshakable equanimity, the mind looks upon wealth and poverty, happiness and misery, free from agitation, free from craving and aversion, steadfast and unmoved, beyond love and hatred, beyond joy and sorrow.

DEGREES OF CONCENTRATION: It may be mentioned here that concentration does not reach the same degree of intensity in each of the forty exercises. For example, in some of them, only neighborhood (access) concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) may be reached, as in the reflections on the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*, etc. The cemetery contemplations (*sīvathikā*) may induce entrance into the first *jhāna*. The first three divine abodes (*brahmavihāra*) may induce the first three *jhānas*. The ten *kasiṇa* exercises, however, as well as the exercise on equanimity (*upekkhā*) and the attention on the in-and-out breathing (*ānāpānasati*), may induce all four *jhānas*.

With regard to the nature, or temperament (*carita*), of the person practicing concentration, it should be noted that the four color *kasiṇas* are particularly suited to an angry nature (*dosacarita*), while, for an unsteady nature (*vitakkacarita*), the disk should be of small size.

Paññā and Vipassanā (Wisdom and Insight)

As has already been noted, the concentration exercises, as such, only serve the purpose of developing mental tranquility (*samatha*) and sharpening concentration (*samādhi*). Mental tranquility, however, is the fundamental and indispensable condition for the successful development of insight (*vipassanā*). And it is this insight alone that has the power to confer entrance to the Four Stages of Holiness (Stream-Enterer [*Sotāpanna*],

Once-Returner [*Sakadāgāmī*], Non-Returner [*Anāgāmī*], Foe-Destroyer [*Arahant*]) and, thus, to free us forever from the ten fetters (*saṁyojana*) that bind beings to the never-ending cycle of rebirth and suffering (*saṁsāra*).

Hence, just as morality (*sīla*) forms the indispensable foundation for the successful development of mental tranquility (*samatha*) and concentration (*samādhi*), in like manner, supported by morality, mental tranquility and concentration form the necessary foundation for the development of wisdom and insight. And insight is the immediate condition for entrance into the Four Stages of Holiness.

For the successful development of insight, however, it is not an absolute necessity to have gained the *jhānas*. The attainment of neighborhood concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) is sufficient for this purpose. Moreover, during the *jhānas*, the development of insight is not possible, since the initial practice of this exercise requires abstract thinking and analyzing, while, in the first *jhāna*, abstract thinking is already weak and is totally absent in the three higher *jhānas*.

Insight, as just noted, is induced by means of analysis and intense contemplation of all the phenomena of existence, that is, of the five aggregates of clinging (*upādāna-kkhandha*): (1) matter (materiality, corporeality) (*rūpakkhandha*); (2) feelings (sensations) (*vedanākkhandha*); (3) perceptions (*saññākkhandha*); (4) (predisposing) mental formations (*saṁkhārakkhandha*); and (5) consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*); by the contemplation of their impersonality, futility, emptiness, and insubstantiality; by contemplating the fact that, in reality, neither inside nor outside these fleeting phenomena is there to be found any permanent, everlasting, absolute ego-entity (*attā*) and that terms such as "I," "self," or "person" are nothing more than conventional names. In point of fact, this teaching of insubstantiality and egolessness (*anattā*), together with the teaching of the conditionedness of all phenomena of existence are the only specific doctrines of Buddhism, and, without insight into these profound truths, no one can correctly grasp the significance of the Four Noble Truths nor enter the path leading to liberation from cyclic existence (*saṁsāra*).

All of the other teachings of the *Buddha* may be found in other philosophies or religions. The *jhānas* had already been attained before, and independently of, the *Buddha*. Loving-kindness (*mettā*) was preached by several other religions. Likewise, the impermanent and suffering nature of existence was taught by others. But the liberating truths of impersonality and conditionedness of all existence were taught and explained in full clarity only by the *Buddha*. And these are the only specific doctrines on which the whole Buddhist structure rests.

Hence, since the understanding of egolessness and conditionedness of existence is the indispensable condition for a real understanding of the Four Noble Truths (*ariya-sacca*) and for deliverance from *saṁsāra*, it may truly be said that no one but the *Buddha* has shown the right method of training the mind and, therewith, the right way to deliverance (*vimutti*).

Developing Insight

> *"All compound things are impermanent; those who realize this through insight-wisdom*[768] *are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity.*[769]
>
> *"All compound things have suffering as their nature; those who realize this through insight-wisdom are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity.*
>
> *"All states are without self;*[770] *those who realize this through insight-wisdom are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity."*[771]

The exercises for developing insight (*vipassanā bhāvanā*) given in the *Visuddhimagga* (XIV—XXII) are extremely varied. Therefore, only the most essential ones will be discussed here. Before, however, the practitioner begins developing insight, he should first have acquired a thorough knowledge of the *Dhamma* and know that the only true or actual elements in this ephemeral existence are the five aggregates: (1) matter (corporeal phenomena), (2) feelings, (3) perceptions, (4) (predisposing) mental formations, and (5) consciousness. And he should know of their impermanence, their empty and conditioned nature, their unsatisfactoriness, and of their twofold division into a mental and corporeal process (*nāma-rūpa*).

Thus, after attaining and then arising from one of the *jhānas*, the practitioner may analyze the state of *jhāna* just experienced. And, in so doing, he will realize that this mental state known as "*jhāna*" is nothing other than a continuous succession of rising and passing phenomena: conceptual thought, discursive thinking, joy, concentration, feeling, perception, (predisposing) mental formations, and consciousness. And, pondering over these phenomena, he will find that this entire mental process is dependent upon corporeality, and that again, corporeality is but a name for the four physical elements (earth [solidity], water [fluidity], fire [heat], wind [motion]) as well as the five physical sense organs and objects of the physical-material world dependent upon them.

On the other hand, the practitioner may divide this mental-corporeal process into its eighteen constituent elements as follows:

The six sense organs:

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[768] *Paññā* is translated here as "insight-wisdom" (*vipassanā paññā*).

[769] That is, to the purification of the mind.

[770] Impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and soullessness (*anattā*) are the three characteristics of all things conditioned by causes (*saṁkhārā*). It is by contemplating these three characteristics that one realizes *nibbāna*. A meditator may concentrate on any characteristic that appeals to him or her most.

Anattā, or soullessness, is the crux of Buddhism. The term *saṁkhārā* "compound," which is applied to any conditioned thing, is used in the two previous verses, while, in the third verse, the term *dhamma* is used in order to show that everything, including the unconditioned *nibbāna*, is without a soul, or self. *Nibbāna* is not included in *saṁkhārā*. It is neither transitory nor sorrowful. *Dhamma* embraces both the conditioned and the unconditioned. *Nibbāna* is, and it is soulless, or devoid of self.

[771] *Dhammapada*, XX, The Path, verses 277—279.

1. Eye;
2. Ear;
3. Nose;
4. Tongue;
5. Body; and
6. Mind.

The six objects:

1. Visible forms (eyes);
2. Sounds (ears);
3. Smell (nose);
4. Taste (tongue);
5. Tangible objects (body); and
6. Thoughts, or ideas (mind).

The six kinds of consciousness:

1. From the cause of the eye and visible form, there arises eye-consciousness;
2. From the cause of the ear and sound, there arises ear-consciousness;
3. From the cause of the nose and smell, there arises nose-consciousness;
4. From the cause of the tongue and taste, there arises tongue-consciousness;
5. From the cause of the body and tangible objects, there arises body-consciousness; and
6. From the cause of the mind and thoughts, or ideas, there arises mind-consciousness.

The six sense organs plus the six objects plus the six kinds of consciousness equals the eighteen constituent elements of the mental-corporeal process. As the *Buddha* said:

> *"From the cause of the eye and visible object, there arises visual cognition; the unity of the three is contact. Contact begets feelings; what is felt is perceived; what is perceived is contemplated. Thus arise thought processes with reference to visible forms, either in the past, the present, or the future."* [The same is repeated for the other senses.]

And he will understand that mere physical phenomena are all that there is — no being, no personality is to be found.

> *"When we find certain things combined, we speak of a chariot or of a cart. In like manner, when these five aggregates appear, we use the designation 'being'."*

Or, just as, after building up walls and roof with various materials, the enclosed space is called a "house," likewise, this psychophysical structure built up with bones, flesh, sinews, internal organs, etc. is called a "body."

Or, just as a child's doll is empty, lifeless, and inactive but may, after batteries have been placed in it, move or stand and appear to be full of life and activity, likewise, mind and body are empty, lifeless, and inactive but, by means of the mutual influence of mind and body upon one another, may move or stand and appear to be full of life and activity.

"As with the help and aid of ships
Men move across the mighty sea,
Just so, conditioned by this body
The mental group is moving on.

"As with the help and aid of men
Ships move across the mighty sea,
Just so, conditioned by the mind
The body-group is moving on."

Thus, the practitioner contemplates the conditionality of this psychophysical process and understands how all of these material and mental phenomena come to decay and dissolution. Furthermore, he perceives the conditioned nature of the material and mental aggregates with regard to their dependent origination, namely:

> *"Among the phenomena, old age, decay, and death can take place only if there is birth; birth only if there is the prenatal kamma-process [becoming]; the kamma-process only if there is attachment to life; attachment only if there is craving [clinging, desire]; craving only if there is feeling [sensation]; feeling only if there is contact; contact only if there are the six sense faculties; the six sense faculties only if there is mind-and-body; mind-and-body only if there is [relinking] consciousness; consciousness only if there are kamma-formations; kamma-formations only if there are ignorance and delusion."*

In this way, all doubts vanish in the practitioner.

Everywhere, in all the forms of existence, the practitioner sees only an ever-changing mental and physical process, kept going through the concatenation of causes and effects and other conditions. No doer does he see behind, beside, or beyond the deed (*kamma*), no receiver of the *kamma*-result (*vipāka*, *phala*). And he rightly understands that it is only by way of conventional language (*vohāra-vacana*) that one can speak of a "doer" who performs the deed or of a "receiver" who experiences the result.

The practitioner considers thus: "The *kamma*-produced five aggregates of the past have become extinguished then and there, but, conditioned through the *kamma* (thoughts, speech, actions) of the past, other aggregates have arisen in the present existence; yet, from the past existence, no soul, self, or ego has passed over to the present existence, only karmic energy continues. Moreover, the present aggregates, produced through the past *kamma*, will become extinguished here, but, conditioned through the

present *kamma*, other aggregates will arise in the future; yet, from the present existence, no soul, self, or ego will pass over to the future existence, only karmic energy will continue."

> *"Whatever there is of corporeality [matter], feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness, whether past, present, or future, one's own or external, gross or subtle, lofty or low, far or near, all these phenomena of existence are impermanent, unsatisfactory, non-self. For whatever is non-self is unsatisfactory and unable to ward off its own impermanence or oppression due to its arising and disappearing [conditionality]. How could these things ever assume the role of a feeler, an agent, an experiencer of consciousness, an abiding personality?"*

The practitioner considers all these things as conditioned, impermanent, and subject to dissolution and disappearance.

> *"All life and all existence here and now,*
> *With all its joy and all its pain,*
> *Depend all on a state of mind,*
> *And that moment quickly passes by.*
>
> *"The aggregate entities that have passed away,*
> *At death as well as during life,*
> *Have all alike become extinguished,*
> *And they will never arise again.*
>
> *"Out of the unseen did they arise,*
> *Into the unseen do they pass.*
> *Just as lightning flashes for but an instant,*
> *So do they flash and pass away."*

The practitioner may also observe the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*) in the external world. The shoot of the *asoka* tree is, at first, light red, then, after two or three days, it becomes deep red. Then, it gets the appearance of a young sprout, then, of a light green leaf. From this time, continually depending upon a similar physical continuity, after one year, it becomes a yellow leaf, and, then, detaching itself from the stalk, it drops to the ground. Thus, each time, before the next stage has appeared, the former stage dies off.

Further, by means of the eighteen kinds of insight, the practitioner overcomes the wrong conceptions through their opposites, namely:

1. Through developing the contemplation on impermanence (*anicca*), he overcomes the wrong idea of permanence.

2. Through developing the contemplation on unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), he overcomes the wrong idea of lasting happiness.
3. Through developing the contemplation on non-self (*anattā*), he overcomes the wrong idea of a permanent soul, self, or ego.
4. Through developing the contemplation on turning away (*nibbidā*), he overcomes affection.
5. Through developing the contemplation on detachment (*virāga*), he overcomes craving (greed, desire).
6. Through developing the contemplation on cessation (*nirodha*), he overcomes arising.
7. Through developing the contemplation on giving up (*paṭinissagga*), he overcomes attachment.
8. Through developing the contemplation on dissolution (*khaya*), he overcomes the wrong idea of something compact.
9. Through developing the contemplation on disappearance (*vaya*), he overcomes *kamma*-accumulation.
10. Through developing the contemplation on changeableness (*vipariṇāma*), he overcomes the wrong idea of something immutable.
11. Through developing the contemplation on the signless (*animitta*), he overcomes the conditions of rebirth.
12. Through developing the contemplation on desirelessness (*appaṇihita*), he overcomes longing.
13. Through developing the contemplation on the void (*suññatā*), he overcomes clinging.
14. Through developing higher wisdom and insight (*adhipaññādhamma*), he overcomes the wrong idea of something substantial.
15. Through developing the true eye of knowledge (*yathābhūta ñāṇadassana*), he overcomes clinging to delusion.
16. Through developing the contemplation on misery (*ādīnava*), he overcomes clinging to desire.
17. Through developing the reflecting contemplation (*paṭisaṁkha*), he overcomes thoughtlessness.
18. Through developing the contemplation on the standstill of existence[772] (*vivaṭṭa*) — that is, *nibbāna* —, he overcomes being entangled in fetters (*saṁyojana*).

Having thus, by means of the eighteen kinds of insight (*vipassanā*, or *mahā-vipassanā*), understood the phenomena, with regard to their three characteristics, he has penetrated the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and egolessness of all existence.

There are ten levels of knowledge, or realization, in *vipassanā*. The first step is theoretical knowledge. All nine of the remaining steps can only be reached through true

[772] *Vivaṭṭa* means "absence of the cycle of existence," "standstill of existence." It is another name for *nibbāna*. *Vaṭṭa* means "round" or "round of rebirths"; in the latter sense, it is a synonym for *saṁsāra*. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 220—221 and p. 240.

Buddhist meditation with the help of a competent teacher.

1. The first step is the appreciation of suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), and non-self (*anattā*) by close examination and analysis (*sammasana*).

2. The second step is the knowledge of the arising and dissolution of mind and matter (*udayabbaya*). Whenever we experience the changes taking place in our sensations, we are on this level. In this step, we train ourselves in insight with regard to the arising and dissolution of mental and material phenomena:

   "All the physical and mental phenomena, without having previously been, come to arise, and, having arisen, they disappear again. Through the arising of the prenatal ignorance, craving, kamma, and nutriment, the arising of corporeality [material form] is conditioned; and, through the extinction of these four causes, the extinction of corporeality takes place."

   All life is like a dewdrop that dissolves as soon as the sun arises. Life is like an empty bubble or like a furrow drawn on the water that immediately disappears again. Life is something insubstantial, unreal, an illusion, a mirage, a phantom, like a fire-wreath called forth by the circular swinging of a firebrand, or like a ghost-land, or foam, or a banana-stem (consisting of mere sheaths).

3. The third step is the knowledge of the rapidly changing nature of mind and matter (*bhanga*). It is experienced as a swift flow of current or a flash of energy. The decay or dissolution aspect, or the breaking up of the *kalāpas*, is most prominent at this stage. Thus, while knowing that all these formations of existence, once arisen, will soon again come to extinction, there arises in us the contemplation on dissolution. As consciousness is conditioned through the physical or mental objects, we consider it as impermanent. We turn away from it; we no longer delight in it. We bring it to extinction, not letting it arise again. We let it go and no longer adhere to it. And, considering it as transient (*anicca*), we overcome the idea of something permanent (*nicca*).

   "The aggregates become dissolved;
   There is no ego to be found.
   The dissolution of the aggregates
   Is what most people would call 'death'."

4. Inasmuch as all aspects of our mind and body are experienced as insubstantial, in step four, there arises the knowledge that this existence is terrifying, or dreadful (*bhaya*). Whoever knows how all formations of experience have become extinguished in the past, how the present ones are coming to extinction, and how

also all future ones will become extinguished, to him, there arises, at that moment, the knowledge consisting in awareness of terror or dread.

5. In the fifth step, we know that this existence is full of misery or woe (*ādīnava*). "The arising of existence is terror": such knowledge, consisting in awareness of terror, is called the knowledge of misery or woe. "The continuity of existence, the course of rebirth, the entering into existence, old age, disease, death, sorrow, lamentation, despair, all are terror": such knowledge, consisting in awareness of terror (*bhaya*), is called the knowledge of misery or woe (*ādīnava*).

6. In the sixth step, we know that this existence is repugnant, disagreeable, disgusting (*nibbidā*). When we thus understand that all formations of existence are misery, our minds turn away from them, are weary of them, and no longer delight in them.

Steps four, five, and six are devoted to seeing the negative aspects of conditioned existence. Our attachment to conditioned existence is so strong that it takes a very powerful dose of medicine to cure us of this attachment. The last four steps concern the effort to be put forth:

7. In step seven, we know that there is an urgent need to escape from this very existence (*muccitukamyatā-ñāṇa*). Now, when finding no delight in the formations of existence, we then wish to get rid of them, we seek escape from them.

8. In step eight, we know that the time has come to work with full realization for liberation, using the three characteristics of existence as the base (*paṭisaṁkha*). That is to say, in order to find deliverance from all formations of existence, we reflect on them and determine their three characteristics.

   We understand that all formations are impermanent (*anicca*), being without duration, persisting for but a short while, limited by their arising and disappearance, perishable, transient, frail, unsteady, subject to change, without substance, unreal, conditioned, subject to extinction (death).

   We understand that all formations are unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), being again and again oppressive, being hard to endure, being the root of all suffering.

   We understand that all formations are non-self (*anattā*), being something alien, unreal, void, empty, without owner, without master, without controller: "Empty are all formations, void are they of any self and of anything pertaining to a self ... I am not anything to anyone, nor does anything belong to me in any way." Just as a reed is hollow and without pith, so also are corporeality, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness empty, void, impersonal, without master, unfree, uncontrollable, impotent, and alien.

9. In step nine, we detach ourselves from all formations and break away from or abandon ego-centeredness, or ego-grasping (*ahaṁkāra*). While we are thus

considering all the formations of existence to be empty (*suñña*) and are determining their three characteristics, we give up fear and anguish and abide in equanimity with regard to them (*saṁkhārupekkhā*), no longer concerning ourselves about them, and no longer conceiving the idea of "I" and "mine."

Whoever considers the formations of existence as impermanent (*anicca*), to him they appear as a passing away. Whoever considers them as unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), to him they appear as terror. Whoever considers them as non-self (*anattā*), to him they appear as empty.

10. And, lastly, we gain the knowledge that will accelerate the attempt to reach the goal (*anulomañāṇa*). "Now the path will reveal itself": thus thinking, we reflect with equanimity on all the formations of existence as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self, and, thereupon, our consciousness sinks into the unconscious mind-stream (*bhavanga-sota*). Immediately thereafter, awareness arises at the mind-door (*mano-dvāra*), taking as objects all phenomena just as before, regarding them as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self. Then, in following up again the interrupted continuity of consciousness, the three impulsive moments (*javana*), known as the preliminary (*parikamma*), access (*upacāra*), and adaptation (*anuloma*) moments, flash up one after the other, with the same phenomena as object. One speaks of "adaptation" because this knowledge adapts itself to the preceding eight kinds of insight knowledge performing the same functions and to the following elements of enlightenment immediately thereafter.

Adaptation Knowledge (*anuloma-ñāṇa*) has the same functions, because it arises through contemplation of the formations of existence together with their three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and egolessness (*anattā*). Adaptation Knowledge, however, forms the conclusion for those kinds of insight that have the formations as object and are leading to the "ascent," that is, to the Path.

Maturity Knowledge (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*): Maturity Knowledge, which follows immediately thereafter, consists in turning the mind to the supramundane path of "Stream-Entry" (*sotāpatti*). At that moment, the mind is no longer driving towards all those phenomena, no longer clinging to them, no longer captivated by them; and, transcending the sphere of the worldling (*puthujjana*), the mind enters the sphere of the noble ones (*ariya*). Just as, in the cloudless sky, the moon shines pure and bright, in like manner, as soon as the darkness of ignorance veiling the truth is dispersed, Maturity Knowledge beholds the purity of *nibbāna*.

Path Knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*): Now, following as immediate continuation upon Adaptation Knowledge, path consciousness arises, by dispersing and demolishing forever and all time, the three fetters (*saṁyojana*) of personality belief (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), and clinging to rules and rituals (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*).

Fruition Knowledge (*phala-ñāṇa*): Immediately upon realizing Path Knowledge, there arise, as results, those supramundane states of consciousness known as the Fruits (*phala*) of the Path, which may be repeated innumerable times during a life-time.

The corresponding process also takes place on attaining the three higher Stages of Holiness (Once-Returner [*Sakadāgāmī*], Non-Returner [*Anāgāmī*], Foe-Destroyer [*Arahant*]), of which the highest one is identical with perfect Holiness, or Arahantship.

Herewith, we have arrived at the highest and final goal of the *Buddha's* Teaching. At this point, a warning is necessary: it is wrong to conclude that, according to the *Buddha's* Teaching, it would be necessary, for realization of the path, to be ever conscious of all those inner workings of the mind. This is by no means the case. In many places in the investigations contained in the *Visuddhimagga*, the point is rather to give a scientific explanation of the whole process of gradual development on the Path to Deliverance. We have here to do mostly with theoretical knowledge and hypotheses gained by abstract reasoning, partly perhaps also with real knowledge gained through intuition by some extraordinary seers or mystics. In any case, deliverance may, under favorable circumstances, sometimes be realized already after a very short time and with no previous knowledge.

Four Foundations of Mindfulness

At this point, we may summarize the more popular and more intelligible exposition of the twofold development given in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta[773] and its Commentary.

There is only one way to the realization of Deliverance, namely, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, that is, to abide self-possessed and attentive, contemplating according to reality the body, feelings, the state of the mind, and the contents of the mind (mind-objects), seeing all as composite, ever-becoming, impermanent, and subject to decay.

For that purpose, the practitioner retires to a solitary place, and, sitting down and directing his whole attention in front of himself, he watches attentively his in-and-out breathing, and attains, thereby, mental concentration (*samādhi*) and the *jhānas*.

Or, in going, standing, or lying down, he is well aware and knows that there is no living entity, no real ego, that moves about, but that it is merely a conventional mode of speaking, if one says "I go," "I stand," etc.

THE BODY: He is full of attention and clearly conscious in going and coming, in looking forward and looking backward, in bending and stretching his body, in eating, drinking, speaking, and keeping silent. Thus, in all outer activities, he is clearly conscious of purpose, utility, duty, and truth.

Further, he contemplates the manifold Parts of the Body, as hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, etc.

Further, he analyzes the body with regard to the Four Elements (*dhātu*), that is,

[773] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Mulapariyāyavagga, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, no. 44. A slightly longer version is found in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, Mahāvagga, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, no. 22.

solidity (*paṭhavī*), fluidity (*āpo*), heat (*tejo*), and motion (*vāyo*).

Further, just as if he would see a corpse thrown to the burial ground, swollen, blue-black in color, he draws the conclusion: "My own body has the same nature as this, will become so, cannot escape it." Or, just as if he would see a corpse, a framework of bones, stripped of flesh, spattered with blood, bones disconnected and scattered in all directions, bones bleached out and resembling shells, bones heaped together, bones weather-worn and crumbled to dust, he draws the conclusion: "My own body has the same nature as this, will become so, cannot escape it." Thus, he contemplates his own body, other bodies, and both. He sees how these bodily phenomena are arising and passing away. And he understands that only corporeality *qua* corporeality is to be found but no ego-entity.

FEELINGS: In contemplating the Feelings, he notices the agreeable feelings, the disagreeable feelings, the indifferent feelings, he sees how these feelings are arising and passing away, and he does not find any ego-entity within or without the feelings.

STATE OF THE MIND: In contemplating the State of the Mind, he notices when it is filled with greed, or hatred, or delusion, or when it is free from these things; he notices when the mind is cramped or scattered, concentrated or not. And he sees how these states of mind are arising and passing away and knows that there is no ego-entity to be found.

CONTENTS OF THE MIND: In contemplating the Mind-Objects, he notices when one of the mental hindrances (desire for gratification of the senses; ill will, hatred, anger, aversion; sloth and torpor; restlessness and worry; doubts, or indecisiveness) is present, or not present, how it arises, and how it is overcome. He contemplates the six sense faculties and the corresponding objects and the mental fetters conditioned through them; he contemplates the five aggregates of existence (corporeality [materiality], feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness), their arising and passing away, the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (mindfulness, investigation of the Truth [that is, "seeking knowledge," specifically, knowledge of the Four Noble Truths], energy, joy, relaxation, concentration, and equanimity), and the Four Noble Truths (Suffering [*dukkha*], its Origin [*samudaya*], its Cessation [*nirodha*], and the Path [*magga*] leading to the cessation of Suffering).

Thus, he contemplates all the phenomena, sees how they arise and pass away, and how, nowhere, is there any ego-entity to be found.

Or, as the *Buddha* said in the *Khuddaka-Nikāya* (*Udāna*, Bodhivagga, Bāhiya Sutta) in a teaching given to a disciple named Bāhiya:

> *"O Bāhiya, whenever you see a form, let there just be the seeing; whenever you hear a sound, let there just be the hearing; when you smell an odor, let there just be the smelling; when you taste a flavor, let there just be the tasting; when a thought arises, let it just be a natural phenomenon arising in the mind. When you*

practice like this, there will be no self, no "I." When there is no self, there will be no running that way and no coming this way and no stopping anywhere. Self does not exist. That is the end of dukkha. That itself is nibbāna."

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta closes with the encouraging words that one who practices the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in this way, sometimes for only seven days, may find Deliverance from all Suffering. ■

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How to Meditate

"Then, Brahmin, when he is possessed of mindfulness and self-control, the Tathāgata gives him a further lesson, thus: 'Come, brother! Seek out a secluded lodging, the root of a tree in a grove, a mountain, a cave or mountain grotto, a cemetery, a forest retreat, a heap of straw in the open air.' And he does so. And, when he has eaten his food, he sits down cross-legged, and, keeping his body straight, he proceeds to practice meditation in order to attain the Absorptions."[774]

Preliminary Steps

Before practicing concentration (*samādhi*), we should give careful consideration to the subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). In ancient times, it was customary for pupils to seek the guidance of a competent teacher to choose a suitable subject, according to their temperaments. But, nowadays, if no competent teacher is available, we must exercise our own judgment and choose a subject we think most suited to our character.

When the subject has been chosen, we should withdraw to a quiet place where there are few distractions. The forest, a cave, or any lonely place is most desirable, for, there, one is least liable to be interrupted during the practice. If none of these places is available, we should select a place that is cool, clean, and quiet.

It should be understood that solitude is within us all. If our minds are not settled, even a quiet forest would not be a congenial place. But, if our minds are settled, even the heart of a busy city may be congenial. The atmosphere in which we live acts as an indirect aid to tranquilize our minds.

Next to be decided is the most convenient time when we and our surroundings are in the best possible condition for the practice. Early in the morning, when the mind is fresh and active, or before bedtime, if one is not over-tired, are generally the most appropriate times for meditation. But, whatever time is selected, it is advisable to keep to that particular time every day, for then, our minds become conditioned to the practice. Regular, consistent practice (daily, without fail, no matter how busy our schedule, no matter what interruptions threaten, no matter whether we are sick or well) is essential if we want to gain maximum benefit from our meditation.

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[774] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Gaṇaka Moggallāna Sutta, no. 107.

Beginners should choose — or make, if they have to — a time for meditation when they can sit for half an hour in uninterrupted peace. If they wish to meditate more, they can add half an hour in the evening. As their meditation deepens, they can sit for increasingly longer periods of time. After a year or so of steady practice, one should be sitting comfortably for an hour at a time. Seasoned meditators manage three or four hours of practice a day.

It is traditional to prostrate three times before sitting down to meditate.

The meditation posture, too, serves as a powerful aid to concentration. Easterners generally sit cross-legged, with the body erect. They sit placing the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh. This is the full lotus position. If this position is difficult, as it certainly is for many, the half position may be adopted, that is, simply placing the right foot on the left thigh or the left foot on the right thigh. When this triangular position is assumed, the whole body is well balanced.

The right hand should be placed on the left hand, the neck straightened so that the nose is in a perpendicular line with the navel. The tongue should rest on the upper palate. The belt should be loosened, and clothes neatly adjusted. Some prefer closed eyes so as to shut out all unnecessary light and external sights.

Although there are certain advantages in closing the eyes, it is not always recommended, since it can lead to drowsiness. Then, the mind gets out of control and wanders aimlessly, vagrant thoughts arise, the body loses its upright posture, and, quite unconsciously, the mouth opens itself, saliva drivels, and the head nods.

The *Buddhas* usually sit with half-closed eyes, looking past the tip of the nose not more than a distance of four feet in front of them.

Those who find the cross-legged posture too difficult may sit comfortably in a chair or any other support sufficiently high to rest the feet on the ground.

It is of no great importance what posture one adopts, provided it is easy, upright, and relaxed. The following diagrams illustrate the recommended postures:

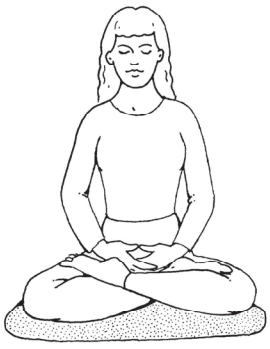

Figure 1: Full-lotus

Figure 2: Half-lotus

Figure 3: Quarter-lotus

Figure 4: Uncrossed

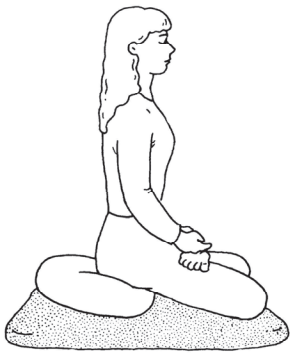

Figure 5: Proper positioning on the cushion

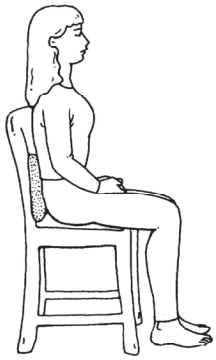

Figure 6: Proper positioning on a chair

The aspirant who is striving to gain one-pointedness of the mind should endeavor to control any unwholesome thoughts at their very inception.

The Ten Armies of Māra

As mentioned in the *Sutta Nipāta*,[775] we may be attacked by the ten armies of the Evil One. They are:

1. Sense desires (*kāma*);
2. Discouragement (*arati*);
3. Hunger and thirst (*khuppipāsā*);
4. Attachment (*taṇhā*);
5. Sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*);
6. Fear (*bhaya*);
7. Doubt (*vicikicchā*);
8. Distraction (*makkha*) and stubbornness (*thambha*);
9. Gain (*lābha*), praise (*siloka*), honor (*sakkāra*), and ill-gotten fame (*micchāyasa*);
10. Self-praise and contempt for others (*attukkaṁsana paravaṁbhana*).

On such occasions, the following practical suggestions given by the *Buddha* will be beneficial to all:

1. Harboring a wholesome thought opposite the encroaching unwholesome one, that is, applying an antidote — for example, loving-kindness in case of hatred.
2. Reflecting upon possible evil consequences — for example, anger sometimes results

[775] *Sutta Nipāta*, Mahāvagga, Padhāna Sutta.

in arguments, physical violence, or even murder.
3. Simple neglect or becoming wholly inattentive to them when they arise.
4. Tracing the cause that led to the arising of the unwholesome thoughts and, thus, forgetting them in the retrospective process.
5. Direct physical force.

Just as a strong man overpowers a weak person, so should one overcome evil thoughts by physical strength. As the *Buddha* advises:

> *"With teeth clenched and tongue pressed against the palate, the monk, by application of force, must constrain and coerce his mind; and, thus, with clenched teeth and taut tongue, constraining and coercing his mind, those evil and unsalutary thoughts will disappear and go to decay; and, with their disappearance, the mind will become settled, subdued, unified, and concentrated."*[776]

The Meditation Session

Having attended to all these necessary preliminary steps, we retire to a secluded place, and, summoning up confidence as to the certainty of achieving our goal, we make a persistent effort to develop concentration.

While meditating, we may intelligently repeat the words of any special formula, since they serve as an aid to evoke the ideas they represent.

However intent we may be on the subject of meditation, we will not be exempt from initial difficulties that inevitably confront a beginner.

> *"The mind wanders, alien thoughts dance before him, impatience overcomes him owing to the slowness of progress, and his efforts slacken in consequence."*[777]

We should learn to welcome these obstacles, inasmuch as they only serve to strengthen our determination. With sustained application, we cut through these difficulties and look straight to our goal, never for a moment turning our eyes away from it.

The stronger our motivation is, the more likely we are to succeed. When we start our meditation session, it is important to understand why we are doing it and to generate a positive motivation toward the learning process. We must choose to practice of our own accord and not under pressure from others.

Before sitting down to meditate, it is traditional to prostrate three times before an image of the *Buddha*. While prostrating, we should collect our attention and bring it to bear upon the reaffirmation of our devotion to the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*.

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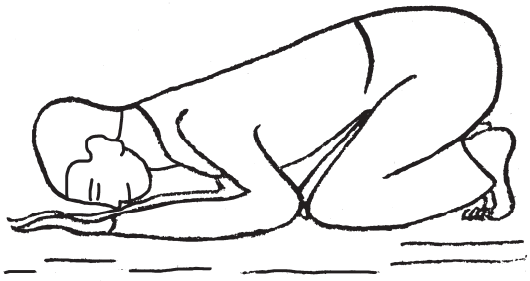
[776] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Sīhanādavagga, Vitakka Saṇṭhāna Sutta, no. 20.
[777] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Sīhanādavagga, Vitakka Saṇṭhāna Sutta, no. 20

There are two gestures used in prostrating: (1) respectful salutation with the hands (*añjalikamma*), as follows:

And (2) the five-limb prostration (*pañc'anga-vandanā*), as follows:



We begin the actual meditation session by concentrating all of our attention on the subject of concentration. The purpose is not to empty the mind but to still the mind by bringing all of its turbulent activity to focus on a single point. (The short-term goal of meditation is to calm, or stabilize, the mind — this is *samatha* meditation; more long-term is the aim to penetrate through to complete understanding of the nature of reality — this is accomplished through *vipassanā* meditation.)

We do not allow our mind to follow any association of thoughts, emotions, or distractions that may arise, but, instead, we give full attention to the meditation subject.

When distractions come, we do not resist them but give more attention to the meditation subject. If our mind strays entirely, we bring it back gently to the meditation subject and start again. Eventually, through years of practice, maintaining complete and uninterrupted attention no longer requires effort. Full attention, and, therefore, full vitality, becomes our natural state of mind.

Before we leave our meditation seat, we should take a few moments to recall our reasons and motivation for undertaking the meditation session, and we share the positive energy that has been generated with those who are near and dear to us, with those who are merely our acquaintances, and even with those who are unknown to us. Sharing what we highly appreciate and admire with others is a very generous and compassionate act.

Therefore, sharing merit with others (*anumodanā*[778]) is also a meritorious deed in itself.

Subjects of Meditation

1. *Kasiṇa* is the use of a purely external device to produce and develop concentration of the mind and attain the four absorptions (*jhānas*). Suppose, for instance, an aspirant takes an earth *kasiṇa* for his subject of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*). The surface of a circle of about one foot in diameter is covered with clay and smoothed well. This concentrative circle is known as the preliminary sign, or image (*parikamma nimitta*). He sets it down some four feet away and concentrates on it saying "*paṭhavī, paṭhavī*" ("earth, earth"), until he becomes so wholly absorbed in it that all adventitious thoughts get automatically excluded from the mind. When he does this for some time — perhaps weeks, or months, or years — he will be able to visualize the object with closed eyes. On this visualized image (*uggaha nimitta*), which is a mental replica of the external object, he concentrates until it develops into a conceptualized image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*).

   According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the difference between the first visualized image and the second conceptualized image is that "in the former, a likeness of the *kasiṇa* appears, while the latter is like the disk of a mirror taken out of a bag, or a well-burnished conch-shell, or the round moon issuing forth from the clouds."

   The conceptualized image possesses neither color nor form. It is just a mode of appearance and is born of perception.

   As he continually concentrates on the abstract concept, he is said to be in possession of "neighborhood concentration" (*upacāra samādhi*), and the innate five Hindrances to spiritual progress (*nīvaraṇa*)[779] are temporarily inhibited by means of one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), rapture (ecstasy, zest) (*pīti*), initial application (*vitakka*), happiness (*sukha*), and sustained application (*vicāra*), respectively.

   Eventually, he gains "attainment concentration" (*appanā samādhi*) and becomes absorbed in *jhāna*.

   To develop the fire *kasiṇa*, one may kindle a fire before oneself and concentrate on it through a hole, a span of about four fingers wide, in a rush-mat, a piece of leather, or a piece of cloth.

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[778] This word is difficult to translate into English. It means "rejoicing with or after" but implies asking others to rejoice in the good *kamma* that one has made and, in so doing, to benefit from it themselves. It is often translated "blessing," but this gives the wrong picture, since one is inviting others to rejoice in what one has done; one is not invoking some blessing of another power upon them.

The person who is inviting others to rejoice does not actually share merit, although this expression is often used. In dedicating the positive energy that has been generated during the meditation session, one is asking others to rejoice. When they do so, they themselves create good *kamma*, which is the cause of their own happiness.

[779] The five Hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are: (1) desire for gratification of the senses (*kāmacchanda*); (2) hatred, aversion, ill will (*vyāpāda*); (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*); (4) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*); and (5) skeptical doubt, or indecisiveness (*vicikicchā*).

One who develops the air *kasiṇa* concentrates on the wind that enters through an open window or a hole in the wall, saying "*vāyo, vāyo*" ("wind, wind").

To develop the color *kasiṇa*, one may make a disk (*maṇḍala*) of the prescribed size and color it blue, yellow, red, or white and concentrate on it repeating the name of the color as in the case of the earth *kasiṇa*. One may even concentrate on blue, yellow, red, or white flowers.

The light *kasiṇa* may be developed by concentrating on the moon, or an unflickering lamplight, or on a circle of light made on the ground or the wall by sunlight or moonlight entering through a wall, crevice, or holes, saying "*āloka, āloka*" ("light, light").

The space *kasiṇa* can be developed by concentrating on a hole, a span of about four fingers wide, in either a well-covered pavilion or a piece of leather or a mat, saying "*okāsa, okāsa*" ("space, space").

2. *Buddhānussati* is the reflection on the virtues of the *Buddha* as follows:

Iti'pi so bhagavā arahaṁ sammāsambuddho vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno sugato lokavidū anuttaro purisadamma-sārathī satthā deva manussāmaṁ buddho bhagavā'ti.

Such, indeed, is the Exalted One — Worthy, Fully Enlightened, Endowed with Wisdom and Conduct, Well-farer, Knower of the Worlds, an Incomparable Charioteer for the training of individuals, Teacher of gods and men, Omniscient, and Holy.

3. *Dhammānussati* is the reflection on the characteristics of the *Dhamma* as follows:

Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko opanayiko paccattaṁ veditabbo viññūhī'ti.

Well-expounded is the Dhamma by the Blessed One, to be realized by oneself, of immediate fruit, inviting investigation,[780] *leading to nibbāna, to be understood by the wise, each for oneself.*

4. *Sanghānussati* is the reflection on the virtues of the pure members of the Holy Celibate Order (*Sangha*) as follows:

Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho; ujupaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho; ñāyapaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho; sāmīcipaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho; yadidaṁ cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisa-puggalā esa bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho; āhuneyyo pāhuneyyo dakkhiṇeyyo añjalikaraṇīyo anuttaraṁ

[780] *Ehi-passiko*, inviting all to come and see.

puññakkhettaṁ lokassā'ti.

Of good conduct is the Order of the disciples of the Blessed One; of upright conduct is the Order of the disciples of the Blessed One; of wise conduct is the Order of the disciples of the Blessed One; of dutiful conduct is the Order of the disciples of the Blessed One. These four pairs of persons constitute eight individuals. This Order of disciples of the Blessed One is worthy of offerings, is worthy of hospitality, is worthy of gifts, is worthy of reverential salutation, is an incomparable Field of Merit to the world.

5. *Sīlānussati* is the reflection on the perfection of one's own virtuous conduct.

6. *Cāgānussati* is the reflection on one's own charitable nature.

7. *Devānussati* is the reflection on the fact that "Deities are born in such exalted states on account of their faith and other virtues, which I too possess." Thus, when one reflects again and again on one's own faith and other virtues, placing deities as witnesses, it is called *devānussati*.

8. *Upasamānussati* is the reflection on the attributes of *nibbāna*, such as the cessation of suffering and the like.

9. *Maraṇānussati* is the reflection on the termination of psychophysical life, that is, death. Contemplation on death enables one to comprehend the fleeting nature of life. When one understands that death is certain and life is uncertain, one endeavors to make the best of one's life by working for self-development and for the development of others, instead of wholly indulging in sensory pleasures. Constant meditation on death does not make one pessimistic and lethargic, but, on the contrary, it makes one more active and energetic. Moreover, it enables one to face death with serenity.

   While contemplating death, one may think that life is like a flame, or that all so-called "beings" are merely the outward temporary manifestations of invisible karmic energy. Using various similes as one likes, one may meditate on the uncertainty of life and the certainty of death.

10. *Kāyagatāsati* is the reflection on the thirty-two impure parts of the body, such as hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, bowels, mesentery, stomach, feces, brain, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, lymph, tears, grease, saliva, nasal mucus, articular fluid, and urine.

    This meditation on the Loathsomeness of the Body leads to dispassion. Many *Bhikkhus* at the time of the *Buddha* attained Arahantship by meditating on these impurities. If one is not conversant with the thirty-two parts, one may meditate

on just one part, such as bones, flesh, or skin.

Inside the body is found a skeleton. It is filled with flesh that is covered with a skin. Thus, physical beauty is nothing but skin deep. When one reflects on the impure parts of the body in this manner, passionate attachment to this body gradually disappears.

This meditation may not appeal to those who are not sensual. They may meditate on the innate creative possibilities of this complex psychophysical entity called "man."

11. *Ānāpānasati* is mindfulness on breathing. *Āna* means "inhalation," and *apāna* means "exhalation." In some books, these two terms are explained in the reverse order.

Concentration on the breathing process leads to one-pointedness of the mind and ultimately to insight, which leads to Arahantship.

Ānāpānasati is one of the best subjects for meditation — it can be practiced by all. The *Buddha* also practiced *ānāpānasati* before His Enlightenment.

A detailed exposition of this meditation is found in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta and in the *Visuddhimagga*. This meditation is discussed in detail in the following chapter. A few practical hints are given here.

Adopting an appropriate posture, breathe out and close the mouth. Then breathe through the nostrils naturally and not forcefully. Inhale first and mentally count "one." Exhale and count "two," concentrating on the breathing process. In this manner, one may count up to ten (but not beyond), constantly focusing one's attention on the respiration. If the mind wanders or if distractions come, do not resist them, but give more attention to the breath. If your mind strays entirely before reaching "ten," do not be discouraged; simply bring it back gently to the breath and start counting over again at "one." After you have successfully counted the breaths from one to ten, without interruption, start over again at one. Later, after you have learned to stabilize your mind, you can concentrate on respiration without counting. What is essential is *concentration* and not counting, which is secondary. As one becomes more proficient in this meditation, one begins to feel light in body and mind and very peaceful. After this meditation is practiced for a certain period of time, a day will come when one realizes that this so-called "body" is supported by mere breath, and one instantly realizes impermanence. Where there is change, there cannot be a permanent entity or an immortal soul. This is the beginning of Insight.

It is thus clear that the objective of this meditation is not merely to gain one-pointedness but also to cultivate Insight in order to gain Deliverance.

12. *Brahmavihāra*: here, *brahma* means "sublime" or "noble," as in *brahmacariya* "noble life"; *vihāra* means "mode, or state, of conduct." They are also termed *appamaññā* "limitless, boundless," because these thoughts are radiated towards all beings without limit or obstruction.

Mettā, "loving-kindness, benevolence, goodwill," is defined as that which

softens one's heart. It is not carnal love or personal affection. The direct enemy of *mettā* is hatred (*dosa*), ill will (*vyāpāda*, *upanāha*, *āghāta*), or aversion (*paṭigha*). Its indirect enemy is personal affection (*pema*). *Mettā* embraces all beings without exception. The culmination of *mettā* is the identification of oneself with all beings (*sabbattatā*). It is the wish for the good and happiness of all. Benevolent attitude is its chief characteristic. It discards ill will.

Karuṇā (compassion) is defined as that which makes the hearts of the good quiver when others are subject to suffering or that which dissipates the sufferings of others. Its chief characteristic is the wish to remove the sufferings of others. Its direct enemy is wickedness (*himsā*), and its indirect enemy is passionate grief (*domanassa*). Compassion embraces sorrow-stricken beings, and it eliminates cruelty.

Muditā is not mere sympathy but sympathetic or appreciative joy. Its direct enemy is jealousy (*issā*), and its indirect enemy is exhilaration (*pahāsa*). Its chief characteristic is happy acquiescence in the prosperity and success of others (*anumodanā*). *Muditā* embraces all beings. It eliminates dislike (*arati*) and is the congratulatory attitude of a person.

Upekkhā literally means "to view impartially," that is, to view with neither attachment nor aversion. It is not hedonistic indifference but perfect equanimity, or well-balanced mind. It is the balanced state of mind amidst all vicissitudes of life, such as praise and blame, pain and happiness, gain and loss, repute and disrepute. Its direct enemy is attachment (*rāga*), and its indirect enemy is callousness. *Upekkhā* embraces the good and the bad, the loved and the unloved, the pleasant and the unpleasant.

The *Visuddhimagga* describes in detail the method to cultivate the *brahmavihāras* in order to develop the *jhānas*.

When once the aspirant succeeds in cultivating the *jhānas*, he can, without difficulty, develop the five supernormal powers (*abhiññā*):

1. Divine Eye, or clairvoyance (*dibbacakkhu*);
2. Divine Ear, or clairaudience (*dibbasota*);
3. Remembrance of past births (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*);
4. Thought reading (*paracittavijānana*);
5. Various psychic powers (*iddhividha*).

Samādhi and these supernormal powers, it may be mentioned, are not essential for the attainment of Arahantship, though they would most definitely be an asset to the possessor. There are, for instance, so-called "dry-visioned *Arahants*" (*sukkhavipassaka*), who, without the aid of the *jhānas*, attain Arahantship straightway by merely cultivating Insight. Many men and women attained Arahantship in the time of the *Buddha* himself without developing the *jhānas*.

The five supernormal powers listed above are mundane (*lokiya*) powers and are

attainable through the utmost perfection in mental concentration (*samādhi*). That is to say that it is only one who has perfected all four fine-material *jhānas* who can develop the five kinds of mundane *abhiññā*. There is also a sixth supernormal power, which is supramundane (*lokuttara*) and which is attainable through penetrating insight (*vipassanā*) — this *abhiññā* is called the "extinction of all cankers" (*āsavakkhaya*). It is attained upon the realization of Arahantship, or perfect Holiness.

Dibbacakkhu is the Celestial, or Divine, Eye, also called clairvoyance, which enables one to see heavenly or earthly things, far or near, that are imperceptible to the physical eye.

Cutūpapātañāṇa, knowledge regarding the dying and reappearing of beings, is identical with this Celestial Eye. *Anāgataṁsañāṇa*, knowledge with regard to the future, and *yathākammūpagatañāṇa*, knowledge regarding the faring of beings according to their own good and bad actions, are two other kinds of knowledge belonging to the same category.

Dibbasota is the Celestial Ear, also called clairaudience, which enables one to hear subtle or coarse sounds far or near.

Pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa is the power to recall the past lives of oneself and others. With regard to this knowledge, the *Buddha's* power is limitless, while, in the case of others, it is limited.

Paracittavijānana is the power to discern the thoughts of others.

Iddhividha is the power to fly through the air, walk on water, dive into the earth, create new forms, etc. ■

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Mindfulness Of Breathing: The Ānāpānasati Sutta[781]

PREPARATION

"Monks, this mindfulness of breathing, which one has developed and made much of, has great fruit and great benefit. This mindfulness of breathing, which one has developed and made much of, perfects the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which one has developed and made much of, perfect the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment, which one has developed and made much of, perfect Insight Knowledge and Liberation.

"And how, monks, does this mindfulness of breathing, which one has developed and made much of, have great fruit and great benefit?

"Here, a monk, having gone to the forest, the foot of a tree, or an empty house, sits down cross-legged, keeping his body upright and setting mindfulness at the tip of the nose. Mindfully, he breathes in; mindfully, he breathes out.

FIRST TETRAD

Step 1: *"While breathing in a long breath, one fully comprehends: I breathe in a long breath. While breathing out a long breath, one fully comprehends: I breathe out a long breath.*

Step 2: *"While breathing in a short breath, one fully comprehends: I breathe in a short breath. While breathing out a short breath, one fully comprehends: I breathe out a short breath.*

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[781] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Part III: Uparipaṇṇāsapāḷi (The Final Fifty Discourses), Anupadavagga, Ānāpānasati Sutta, no. 118. This chapter is adapted, in part, from Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Mindfulness with Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1997]), and, in part, from Paravahera Vajirañāna Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice: A General Exposition according to the Pāḷi Canon of the Theravāda School* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society [3rd edition, 1987]), Chapter 18, Ānāpānasati Bhāvanā: Meditation on Breathing, pp. 227—258.

Step 3: *"One trains oneself: experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing, I shall breathe in; experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing, I shall breathe out.*

Step 4: *"One trains oneself: calming the physical element, I shall breathe in; calming the physical element, I shall breathe out.*

SECOND TETRAD

Step 5: *"One trains oneself: thoroughly experiencing rapture, I shall breathe in; thoroughly experiencing rapture, I shall breathe out.*

Step 6: *"One trains oneself: thoroughly experiencing happiness, I shall breathe in; thoroughly experiencing happiness, I shall breathe out.*

Step 7: *"One trains oneself: thoroughly experiencing how the mental elements condition the mind, I shall breathe in; thoroughly experiencing how the mental elements condition the mind, I shall breathe out.*

Step 8: *"One trains oneself: calming the mental elements, I shall breathe in; calming the mental elements, I shall breathe out.*

THIRD TETRAD

Step 9: *"One trains oneself: thoroughly experiencing the state of the mind, I shall breathe in; thoroughly experiencing the state of the mind, I shall breathe out.*

Step 10: *"One trains oneself: gladdening the mind, I shall breathe in; gladdening the mind, I shall breathe out.*

Step 11: *"One trains oneself: concentrating the mind, I shall breathe in; concentrating the mind, I shall breathe out.*

Step 12: *"One trains oneself: liberating the mind from attachment, I shall breathe in; liberating the mind from attachment, I shall breathe out.*

FOURTH TETRAD

Step 13: *"One trains oneself: constantly contemplating the impermanence of all conditioned things, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating the impermanence of all conditioned things, I shall breathe out.*

Step 14: *"One trains oneself: constantly contemplating becoming weary of and dispassionate towards the things which the mind has desired and to which it has become attached, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating becoming weary of and dispassionate towards the things which the mind has desired and to which it has become attached, I shall breathe out.*

Step 15: *"One trains oneself: constantly contemplating cessation, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating cessation, I shall breathe out.*

Step 16: *"One trains oneself: constantly contemplating the abandonment of mental impurities, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating the abandonment of mental impurities, I shall breathe out.*

"Monks, this is how this mindfulness of breathing, which one has developed and made much of, has great fruit and great benefit."

The Four Things That Must Be Contemplated

There are four things that are proper, correct, and necessary to contemplate every time we breathe in and breathe out:

1. The body (*kāya*);
2. Feelings (*vedanā*);
3. The mind (*citta*);
4. *Dhamma*.

Tetrad 1: Contemplating the Body

There are two types of bodies that must be contemplated: (1) the breath-body, that is, the various elements that make up the breath, and (2) the flesh-body, that is, the various elements that make up the physical body of flesh and bones. At the same time, we contemplate, experience, and come to understand how the breath can be used to regulate the body.

In the first tetrad, we study the breath in a special way. We note every kind of breath that occurs and study what each is like. Long breaths, short breaths, calm breaths, violent breaths, slow breaths, and fast breaths — we must know them all. Of all of the different kinds of breaths that arise, we must know what the nature of each one is, we must know its characteristics, and we must know its functions.

Next, we observe the influence that the various kinds of breath have on the physical body. The breath has a great influence on the physical body, and this influence needs to be seen and understood clearly and fully. We observe until it becomes clear that

the breath and the physical body are interconnected and inseparable. We note and understand exactly how the breath conditions the physical body. Once this interrelationship is clearly understood, the breath can be effectively used to regulate the body.

Tetrad 2: Contemplating Feelings

There are three main points to realize regarding feelings:

1. Understanding feelings themselves;
2. Knowing how feelings condition the mind;
3. Discovering that we can control the mind by controlling feelings.

Since the first and second tetrads of practice both follow the same principles, it is helpful to compare the two. In the tetrad concerning the body, we discover that the breath conditions the body, and so we study the breath. We study the breath until we know it in great detail. Then, we study how the breath influences the body. Then, by regulating the breath, we gain control over the physical body. As for the mind, its conditioner is feelings. By controlling feelings so that they do not condition or stir up the mind or, rather, so that they condition the mind in a positive, desirable way, we are able to calm and control the mind.

Tetrad 3: Contemplating the Mind

First, in tetrad 1, we practice to understand and control the body. Second, in tetrad 2, we practice to understand and control feelings. Then, after fully mastering the first two tetrads, we practice in order to understand and control the mind.

We begin our study of the mind by observing what kinds of thoughts it has. In what way are its thoughts wholesome, and in what ways are they not wholesome? Are the thoughts defiled or undefiled? Are the thoughts correct, or are they mistaken? We observe until we understand all of the different kinds of thoughts that pass through our mind. Little by little, we learn to recognize these thoughts, and we come to realize that we are able to direct the mind as we desire. The mind can be made to think in different ways, or it can be kept still. We can make the mind satisfied, or even dissatisfied, if we want. The mind can be made to experience different kinds of happiness and joy. It can be stilled, calmed, and concentrated in different ways and to different degrees. Finally, the mind can be liberated — we can make it let go completely of any thoughts to which it has become attached or which have attached to it.

Tetrad 4: Realizing the True Dhamma

In tetrad 4, we contemplate the nature of reality. This is what is meant by "studying *Dhamma*." The purpose is to study, to understand, to know, and to realize the truth about the ultimate nature of reality. We do this by contemplating:

1. *Anicca* (impermanence): we come to know that all conditioned things are impermanent and in a constant state of flux.

2. *Dukkha* (suffering): we come to know that all conditioned things are inherently unable to satisfy our desires.

3. *Anattā* (no self): we come to know that the idea that there is in man a permanent, everlasting, absolute entity, be it called "soul," "self," "ego," or whatever, is an imaginary, false belief which has no factual basis.

4. *Suññatā* (emptiness): we come to know that all phenomena are void of self: "void is the world … because it is void of a self and anything belonging to a self."

5. *Tathatā* (thusness): we come to know the thusness or suchness of all things.

Together, these constitute the one Ultimate Truth. When we fully realize, fully experience the truth of the ultimate nature of reality, the mind becomes pure, the mind becomes liberated. Nothing is regarded as good or bad, right or wrong, gain or loss, victory or defeat, merit or demerit, happiness or sadness, having or lacking, positive or negative, when we see thusness, the highest *Dhamma*. The highest *Dhamma* is right here in "merely thus," for thusness is above and beyond all meanings of positive and negative, above all meanings of optimism and pessimism, beyond all dualities. This is the finish. The Truth to be realized in tetrad 4 is the understanding of Ultimate Reality, that all things are "only thus, merely such."

To see *Dhamma* sufficiently is only the first step. Now, we see that the mind begins to let go, to loosen up its attachments. Little by little, our attachments melt away. This will be experienced until all attachment is extinguished. Once attachment is completely extinguished, the mind is completely free. This is what is known as "abandonment" (*paṭinissagga*). The *Buddha* said that, at the end, we must abandon everything. This means that we hang on to nothing, we become attached to nothing. All of our lives, we have been taking the things of nature to be "I" and "mine," but now, we have become wise and are able to abandon everything. We become free from any and all effects and influences of attachment. The goal of *ānāpānasati* finishes here. To learn the secret of *Dhamma* is to know that nothing should be attached to, and then not to attach to anything. All is liberated. The case is closed. We have reached our goal.

Preparation

> *"Monks, this mindfulness of breathing, which one has developed and made much of, has great fruit and great benefit. This mindfulness of breathing, which one has developed and made much of, perfects the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which one has developed and made much of, perfect the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment, which one has developed and made much of, perfect Insight Knowledge and Liberation.*
>
> *"And how, monks, does this mindfulness of breathing, which one has developed and made much of, have great fruit and great benefit?*
>
> *"Here, a monk, having gone to the forest, the foot of a tree, or an empty house, sits down cross-legged, keeping his body upright and setting mindfulness at the tip of the nose. Mindfully, he breathes in; mindfully, he breathes out."*

COMMENTS: In the beginning, the practitioner, who has completed training in morality (*sīla*) and other necessary disciplines, should receive instruction from a teacher who has experience in attaining the *jhāna* states by the same practice. Failing this, the practitioner should learn the details from a person who is able to explain it to him from a knowledge of the scriptures. Having first thoroughly studied the subject, the practitioner should then choose one of the three types of sites described in the text: (1) a forest, (2) the foot of a tree, or (3) an empty house. After selecting any of these suitable places and having completed the preliminary steps of taking refuge in the Three Jewels (that is, the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*) and performing prostrations, the practitioner sits down cross-legged, keeping the upper part of the body erect, and letting the body rest on the spinal column by keeping the chest, neck, and head straight. The practitioner may sit in any other way that will afford greater ease, as long as the spinal column remains straight. He should then obliterate from his mind all sensory thoughts and fix his attention upon the object of concentration, setting mindfulness at the tip of the nose and watching the breath as it goes in or comes out, as though he were standing behind it. Here, "mindfully, he breathes in; mindfully, he breathes out" means that mindfulness is fixed at the tip of the nose or on the upper lip. These are the places connected with the breathing in and out. The practitioner attends to the incoming (and outgoing) breath there. He considers the contact of the incoming and outgoing breath through mindfulness that is fixed at the tip of the nose or on the upper lip. Mindfully, he breathes in; mindfully, he breathes out. He does not consider the breath when it has gone inside or when it has gone outside. Rather, he considers the contact of the incoming breath and the outgoing breath at the tip of the nose or on the upper lip with complete mindfulness. Thus, the practitioner does not attend to the perception of the incoming and outgoing breaths. Instead, he is aware of the *contact* at the tip of the nose or on the upper lip, and he breathes in or out with mindfulness. If, when the breath comes in or goes out, the practitioner considers it within or without, his mind will become distracted. If his mind is distracted, his body and mind will waver and tremble. These are the disadvantages. Nor should he purposely breathe

very long or very short breaths. If he does so, his mind will once again become distracted. He should not attach himself to diverse perceptions connected with breathing in and breathing out. If he does, his other mental factors will be disturbed. If his mind is disturbed, his body and mind will waver and tremble, and impediments will arise. Thus, he should be diligent and not let the mind be distracted. He should not try too strenuously, nor should he be lax. Hence, the text: "Here, a monk, having gone to the forest, the foot of a tree, or an empty house, sits down cross-legged, keeping his body upright and setting mindfulness at the tip of the nose. Mindfully, he breathes in; mindfully, he breathes out." This completes the procedure of fixing one's attention upon the object of concentration and of preparing the body and the mind for the practice of meditation.

First Tetrad

> **Step 1:** *"While breathing in a long breath, one fully comprehends: I breathe in a long breath. While breathing out a long breath, one fully comprehends: I breathe out a long breath."*

COMMENTS: This is the actual beginning of the practice of mindfulness of breathing. It recognizes and distinguishes between the two activities involved in breathing, namely, the in-breath and the out-breath, the comprehension of which makes the practitioner mindful. There are nine ways in which the practitioner, in breathing in and in breathing out, knows that he is doing so. (1) He breathes in a long breath, (2) he breathes out a long breath, (3) he breathes in and out long breaths, each of which should occupy a given time. In so doing, he feels that his breathing is gradually becoming tranquil and peaceful. Then, the desire to continue arises; with this desire, (4) he breathes in a long breath, (5) he breathes out a long breath, (6) he breathes in and out long breaths, each being more tranquil than before. At this time, he becomes joyful. With the mind filled with joy, (7) he breathes in a long breath, (8) he breathes out a long breath, (9) he breathes in and out long breaths, each of which is absolutely tranquil and peaceful. As one progresses in this step, the mind gradually becomes diverted from the awareness of long breaths and becomes established in equanimity. The breathing becomes very subtle, while the mind attains to the after-image (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) and is, therefore, diverted from its original focus on breathing. The long breaths arising in this step represent the physical body; concentration upon the physical body, as represented by long breaths, is mindfulness; comprehension of the characteristics of the physical body, such as impermanence, is wisdom (*paññā*). To one who attains this knowledge in any of the nine ways comes the fulfillment of this meditation as regards the contemplation of the physical body.

> **Step 2:** *"While breathing in a short breath, one fully comprehends: I breathe in a short breath. While breathing out a short breath, one fully comprehends: I breathe out a short breath."*

COMMENTS: The second step, that of short breathing, embraces the same nine ways of knowing the breath found in the first step. The difference is that the breathing is more rapid and rougher than in the first step. Thus, the practitioner, knowing the two kinds of breaths in two degrees, that is, the in-breath, the out-breath, long breathing, and short breathing, knows each of them in nine ways. As a result, he becomes established in mindfulness, which leads to absorption (*jhāna*) by the path of concentration (*samādhi*) and to insight (*vipassanā*) regarding the characteristics of the physical body.

> **Step 3:** *"One trains oneself: experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing, I shall breathe in; experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: In this step, there are three things that must be done: (1) noting the breath as it is inhaled and exhaled; (2) noting the three divisions, that is, the beginning, the middle, and the end; and (3) training the mind. In the case of the movement caused by the in-coming breath, the tip of the nose is the beginning of its course, the heart is the middle, and the navel is the end. With the movement caused by the out-going breath, the navel is the beginning, the heart is the middle, and the tip of the nose is the end. Having a clear understanding of this, one breathes in and then one breathes out, while the mind is associated with the knowledge based upon the perception of the whole process of respiration, all of which finds expression mentally as "experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing, I shall breathe in; experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing, I shall breathe out." All three divisions must be clearly perceived, hence the expression "experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing ..." One therefore makes an effort not to be confused or distressed at any point but to train the mind to comprehend each of the divisions fully and clearly. Hence, the expression, "One trains oneself ...," which also means that, through the mindfulness associated with the full knowledge of breathing, one develops higher concentration and wisdom, which necessarily presuppose previous training in virtue (*sīla*). One thus completes the threefold training.

> **Step 4:** *"One trains oneself: calming the physical element, I shall breathe in; calming the physical element, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: In this step, the practitioner comes to the last stage of the first tetrad, wherein he experiences complete calming of the physical body and, thereby, attains complete concentration (*samādhi*). In-breaths and out-breaths are regulated by the mind but cannot exist without the physical body. The practitioner controls his breath in such a manner as not to fill the nasal cavity with a deep and thick volume of air but breathes in and out with a view to restraining the violence and magnitude of his breath and, thus, makes an effort to maintain rhythmical breathing until he attains the state of absorption (*jhāna*). Since the breathing process is regulated by the mind, its manner of functioning will depend upon the state of the mind at any given time, being agitated when the mind is perturbed and gentle when the mind is calm. When the mind attains to the absorption

stages in their due order, the breathing becomes increasingly subtle in each succeeding stage. In the fourth *jhāna*, it is exceedingly calm and then ceases to function. When the mind attains full knowledge and comprehends the three characteristics of phenomenal existence, namely, suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), and non-self (*anattā*), then, at that moment, the breathing assumes its final state of tranquility, and the mind attains to full concentration upon the object of contemplation. Thus, the physical element of respiration becomes completely calmed. It is with a view to attaining this state that the practitioner practices mindfulness of breathing in and out. Hence, the text: "One trains oneself: calming the physical element, I shall breathe in; calming the physical element, I shall breathe out."

COMMENTS ON THE FIRST TETRAD: There are several external methods connected with the first tetrad which have been adopted as special means for the preliminary fixing of attention, these are: (1) counting; (2) following the process with mindfulness; (3) noting the contact of the breaths; (4) applying the mind to the sign (*nimitta*, that is, "sign," "mark," "mentally created distinction"); (5) contemplating the characteristic marks; (6) transition of the mind from the lower consciousness to the higher; (7) purification, or experiencing the fruit; and (8) reflecting on the attainments. Of these, the first five are the means adopted to establish mindfulness upon the subject of respiration, while the last three are the stages that mark the results. (1) Counting the Breaths: The breaths to be counted must be full and normal. Before beginning to count, it would be well to draw a few deep, slow breaths, first by inhaling and filling the body as far as the diaphragm and then exhaling slowly and emptying the body of the air drawn in. Repetition of this for a while will induce physical relaxation and awaken the brain to smooth functioning. Then, starting from either inhalation or exhalation, the practitioner should first count from one to five and, then, from one to ten, but he should not stop short of five nor go beyond ten, nor should he make any break in the process. He should first count slowly. As the first breath enters the body, he should say "one," and, as it leaves the body, he should repeat "one," and the same with "two, two," and so on up to ten, after which he begins again at "one." As he counts thus, the incoming and outgoing breaths become clear and distinct to his mind. Then, he should abandon the slow process of counting and commence to count quickly as "one, two, three, ... etc." The breathings that became evident through the previous (slow) way of counting now move quickly. Then, noting the swift motion of the breaths, he should try neither to retain them in his body nor to expel them but should note them as they reach the nostrils and count quickly, "one, two, three, ... etc." When the object of concentration (the breath) is associated with this process of counting, the counting itself enables the mind to become collected and wholly applied to the object. In the process of counting quickly, the breath seems like a continuous current of air present at the tip of the nose. Noting its uninterrupted continuity, the practitioner should count quickly as before, focusing on the air as it passes by the tip of the nose. For it is only by the development of mindfulness fixed at the point where the breaths make contact that success in this practice is attained. Therefore, until mindfulness is fully established on the in-breath and the out-breath, the practitioner

should continue to count. After mindfulness has been fully established on the in-breaths and out-breaths as they pass by the tip of the nose, the counting can be discontinued. "Counting slowly" and "counting quickly" should not be understood as a slowing down or a speeding up of the breath by deliberately causing a change in their rhythm. This is the stage of bare observation, and there is no active control of the breath, but merely the watching and noting of it as it proceeds. If it speeds up or slows down "by itself," this is merely noted. "Counting slowly," therefore, means waiting at each count until the breath unit is finished before registering the count. This is the initial stage. When some proficiency has been reached, and consciousness is less inclined to stray, the "counting quickly" can be done at the beginning of the breath unit. Thus, consciousness becomes less intent upon the numbers and more so on the breaths themselves. (2) Following the Process with Mindfulness: In this exercise, the practitioner should give up counting and pursue the breathings with mindfulness. In so doing, he should pay no attention to the beginning, the middle, or the end of the breathings as he does in the third step of the first tetrad. In directing the attention to follow the breath, he should note the place, namely, the tip of the nose, where the breaths make contact in going in and out of the body. In the method of counting, he has already noted the points of contact by counting them together with the breaths. Here, he tries to follow the breaths without the help of counting and with mindfulness alone, noting only the contact of breaths and focusing attention on the tip of the nose. Thus, following the breaths with mindfulness, he is aware of their existence by feeling their contact with the tip of the nose, which is the base of his attention. Hence, he should focus upon the point of contact (the sign) with the thought "this is where they touch." The next two methods, (3) Noting the Contact of the Breaths and (4) Applying the Mind to the Sign, are included in method (2), Following the Process with Mindfulness, as explained above. The instruction "applying the mind to the sign" is to be understood as the application of the mind to the object of mindfulness, that is, the focus on the point of contact, wherefrom the after-image (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) arises. Thus, when the practitioner attends to the object of concentration with mindfulness, the after-image arises, and, then, intense concentration (*appanā*) is attained, together with the *jhāna* factors (*jhānanga*). For some, the gross process of breathing gradually subsides in the course of counting, and, thereby, the physical body and the mind become tranquilized. At that moment, the physical body becomes light, as though it would rise up into the sky. From the time when the gross breathings have become calm, the mind notes the sign of the ever more subtle breathings as its object. Unlike other subjects of meditation (*kammaṭṭhāna*), which become keener and clearer as they develop, the object (that is, the breath) of mindfulness of breathing meditation (*ānāpānasati*) acquires greater subtlety as it develops. It may even become imperceptible, and the practitioner may feel that he has ceased to breathe altogether. When the breath becomes imperceptible, the practitioner should not move from his meditation seat nor change his posture, or else he will lose this level of attainment and will have to start over again. He should, therefore, remain in the same seat and regain the level of concentration by fixing his thought upon the original points of the sign of breathing (that is, the tip of the nose). By considering with close attention, he maintains awareness of the existence of breaths as they touch his

nostrils. Thus, he regains the after-image of respiration that exists in the finest state. *Ānāpānasati* is the most subtle and difficult subject of meditation and is not suitable for a person whose powers of memory and concentration are poor. Consequently, it requires complete mindfulness and quick understanding. The practitioner should always keep his attention focused at the point that comes into contact with the breaths. As he thus practices, in a short time, the mental image appears. Its manner of appearance varies according to the type of mentality. To some, it appears with a soft touch, like a piece of cotton or a cooling breeze; to others, like a star, a round ruby, or a pearl; to others, again, it seems like the harsh contact of a pointed stick; others feel it as a long string or a wreath of white flowers or a crest of smoke; to others, it is like a cobweb, a cloud, a lotus flower, a wheel, or a disk of the sun or the moon. In the course of this practice, the practitioner should closely observe and develop these thought-forms.

In *ānāpānasati* meditation, there are three distinct mental objects: (1) in-breath (*passāsa*), (2) out-breath (*assāsa*), and (3) their *nimitta*, or sign. Of these, in-breath and out-breath are to be thoroughly studied as summarized above; *nimitta* is to be known from the stage of following the process with mindfulness, through feeling the in-breaths and out-breaths with special attention and applying the mind to the place with which they come into contact with the body (namely, the tip of the nose). Until these three become clear and distinct, meditation is not fulfilled. Though these three objects are inseparably connected with the same subject of meditation, they differ from one another according to the condition of the mind that arises with them. The mind that arises with inhalation notes that its manner of functioning is different from that of exhalation. The mind that arises with exhalation notes that its manner of functioning is different from that of inhalation. The mind that is established on the sign (*nimitta*) of breathing notes neither breathing in nor breathing out, but the point of their contact. Thus, it is true to say that these three are not objects of the same state of mind, though they are connected with the same subject of meditation. Until these distinctive states have become clear and fully apprehended, the meditation leads neither to the level of "access" nor to *jhāna*. It is not in-breath nor out-breath that leads to *jhāna* but their *nimitta*, or sign. Nevertheless, this *nimitta* cannot be attained unless in-breaths and out-breaths are thoroughly studied. When the *nimitta* is visualized in the forms described above, it should be protected with special care and attention and should be visualized repeatedly. The practitioner should concentrate his whole mind on the *nimitta*, that is to say, after the appearance of the *nimitta*, he neither counts, follows his breath, nor notes their touch, but keeps his mind upon the image visualized in connection with respiration. With the increasing intensity of the meditation, the hindrances are eliminated, and the mind is concentrated in the state of access *samādhi*. From this stage, he should not reflect upon the color or shape of the image but take it as the concept of the mental representation derived from the air element of breathings. As he cultivates it, the fourth and fifth *jhānas* are attained in due course. The practitioner who wishes to strengthen the same object of concentration, with a view to further attainments, should make his mind capable of acquiring the knowledge of insight by contemplating the three characteristics of existence (suffering, impermanence, and no self). Rising from the fourth *jhāna*, he sees the mind and body as the source of

the breathings; for, it is on account of the body and the mind that the breath is set in motion. Then, he distinguishes between the breathings and the body as physical form (*rūpa*) and the mind and thoughts as *nāma*, the immaterial. Next, he contemplates their characteristics of impermanence (transitoriness), suffering (painfulness), and non-reality (*anattā*, *suññatā*). Developing this knowledge, he gains freedom from the craving for the things which are perishing moment by moment and attains the full knowledge that transports him through the Four Stages of Holiness (Stream-Enterer [*Sotāpanna*], Once-Returner [*Sakadāgāmī*], Non-Returner [*Anāgāmī*], Foe-Destroyer [*Arahant*]), the fruit of which he realizes in Arahantship, the final goal of his training. This is the end of the practice of concentration in mindfulness of breathing, beginning with counting the breaths and ending with the realization of the fruit of Arahantship.

Second Tetrad

> **Step 5:** *"One trains oneself: thoroughly experiencing rapture, I shall breathe in; thoroughly experiencing rapture, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: There are two ways in which the practitioner experiences rapture (*pīti*) (also called "ecstasy" or "zest") while he attends to mindfulness of breathing. First, when he enters into the first two *jhānas*, he experiences rapture, owing to the success induced by the full realization of the object. Second, rising from the two *jhānas*, wherein rapture (*pīti*) is present, he contemplates the rapture associated with the *jhāna* and realizes that it is transitory and impermanent. At the moment when he penetrates into its characteristics by means of insight (*vipassanā*), he experiences rapture (*pīti*), because he is in no way confused. For, in the words of the *Paṭisambhidā*:[782]

> *By breathing in a long breath, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced. By breathing out a long breath, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced. By breathing in and out a long breath, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced.*
>
> *By breathing in a short breath, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced. By breathing out a short breath, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-*

[782] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, Pārāyaṇavagga, *Paṭisambhidāmagga*. The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* contains a detailed analysis of concepts and practices already mentioned in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and *Dīgha*, *Saṁyutta*, and *Anguttara Nikāyas*. It is divided into three sections: (1) *Mahā Vagga*, (2) *Yuganaddha Vagga*, and (3) *Paññā Vagga*, each of which contains ten topics.

pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced. By breathing in and out a short breath, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced.

By breathing in and experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced. By breathing out and experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced. By breathing in and out and experiencing all aspects of the process of breathing, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced.

By breathing in and calming the physical element, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced. By breathing out and calming the physical element, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced. By breathing in and out and calming the physical element, mindfulness is established in him who realizes composure and one-pointedness of mind. Through that knowledge, together with that mindfulness, rapture is experienced.

Likewise, the practitioner experiences rapture (*pīti*) and is full of rapture throughout the course of his meditation and all its stages, such as contemplating, realizing, reflecting, and possessing faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, etc. Hence, the text, "thoroughly experiencing rapture, I shall breathe in; thoroughly experiencing rapture, I shall breathe out."

Step 6: *"One trains oneself: thoroughly experiencing happiness, I shall breathe in; thoroughly experiencing happiness, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: This step refers to the first three *jhānas*, wherein the practitioner experiences the happiness (*sukha*) induced by the object of mindfulness of breathing and the clarity of his mental vision. The remaining details are the same as in step five above.

Step 7: *"One trains oneself: thoroughly experiencing how the mental elements condition the mind, I shall breathe in; thoroughly experiencing how the mental elements condition the mind, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: In this step, the practitioner fully realizes the mental elements (*citta-saṁkhāra*) associated with all of the *jhāna* states. Here, the term "mental elements" is

applied to the two aggregates "feeling" (*vedanā*) and "perception" (*saññā*).

> **Step 8:** *"One trains oneself: calming the mental elements, I shall breathe in; calming the mental elements, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: In this step, the practitioner trains himself with a view to tranquilizing and refining mental factors (*jhānanga*) of a gross and low nature. They are the mental factors bound up with feeling and perception, which are associated with rapture (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*). Rapture and happiness, however, are the concomitants of feelings that may bind one to the *jhāna* state, and, thus, can be a hindrance to achieving further levels of attainment. Hence, they are said to be of a gross and lower nature. The practitioner, therefore, contemplates the transitory nature of feelings and develops insight (*vipassanā*) and so outgrows the ordinary delight experienced in *jhāna*; hence, the text "calming the mental elements, I shall breathe in; calming the mental elements, I shall breathe out."

Third Tetrad

> **Step 9:** *"One trains oneself: thoroughly experiencing the state of the mind, I shall breathe in; thoroughly experiencing the state of the mind, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: In this step, the practitioner, who has attained the four *jhāna* states, contemplates the state of the mind and its transitory nature in each *jhāna* and realizes that the mind is changing from moment to moment. With this thought, he breathes in and out.

> **Step 10:** *"One trains oneself: gladdening the mind, I shall breathe in; gladdening the mind, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: Here, the practitioner practices breathing in and breathing out, while simultaneously rejoicing, pleasing, and delighting the mind. In this step, the mind is gladdened in two ways: first, the practitioner enters into the first two *jhānas*, in which rapture and happiness are present. The moment he has attained to the *jhānas*, he pleases and rejoices the mind with this rapture and happiness. Second, he contemplates the transitory nature of rapture and happiness. Thus, at the moment of insight, he takes rapture and happiness as the objects of his thoughts and pleases and rejoices his mind. This is the practice described as "gladdening the mind, I shall breathe in; gladdening the mind, I shall breathe out."

> **Step 11:** *"One trains oneself: concentrating the mind, I shall breathe in; concentrating the mind, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: In this step, the mind must be well focused on the object by means of the first *jhāna*, the second *jhāna*, and so on. Entering into those *jhānas* and then rising from them, the practitioner contemplates the ever-changing nature of the mind associated with each *jhāna*. On the arising of insight, there is a momentary concentration of the mind induced by the realization of its characteristics. By means of this, he focuses the mind while he practices the breathings. This is summarized as "concentrating the mind, I shall breathe in; concentrating the mind, I shall breathe out."

> **Step 12:** *"One trains oneself: liberating the mind from attachment, I shall breathe in; liberating the mind from attachment, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: Here, liberating the mind, the practitioner practices breathing in and breathing out. In the first *jhāna*, he releases the mind from the five hindrances: (1) desire for gratification of the senses (*kāmacchanda*); (2) ill will, hatred, anger, aversion (*vyāpāda*); (3) lethargy, depression, drowsiness (also known as sloth and torpor) (*thīna-middha*); (4) restlessness, agitation, distraction (*uddhaca-kukkucca*); (5) skeptical doubts (*vicikicchā*). By means of the second *jhāna*, the mind is released from initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*). By means of the third *jhāna*, the mind is released from rapture (*pīti*). By means of the fourth *jhāna*, the mind is released from happiness (*sukha*) and pain (*dukkha*). Entering into and then rising from the four fine-material absorptions (*rūpajjhāna*), the practitioner contemplates the mind associated with each of those *jhāna* states and knows its nature to be transitory and impermanent. At the moment of insight, he breathes in and breathes out, setting the mind free from the concept of permanence by contemplating impermanence (*anicca*), from the concept of happiness by contemplating suffering (*dukkha*), from the concept of self by contemplating non-self (*anattā*), from delight by contemplating repulsion, from passion by contemplating detachment, from the cause of origination by contemplating cessation, and from clinging by contemplating renunciation. Thus, he is described: "liberating the mind from attachment, I shall breathe in; liberating the mind from attachment, I shall breathe out."

Fourth Tetrad

> **Step 13:** *"One trains oneself: constantly contemplating the impermanence of all conditioned things, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating the impermanence of all conditioned things, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: This formula deals with the contemplation of the transitoriness (*anicca*) that is inherent in the Five Aggregates ([1] corporeality, or matter [*rūpa*]; [2] feeling, or sensation [*vedanā*] — the bare feeling based upon contact; [3] perceptions [*saññā*] — the tendency to recognize an object; [4] predisposing mental formations [*saṁkhāra*] — the subsequent emotion based upon an appraisal of the meaning of a feeling [*vedanā*]; and [5] consciousness [*viññāṇa*]), of which rising, falling, and changing are the natural

characteristics. Discerning that each aggregate is, by its very nature, impermanent, the practitioner breathes in and breathes out. Thus, he trains himself.

> **Step 14:** *"One trains oneself: constantly contemplating becoming weary of and dispassionate towards the things which the mind has desired and to which it has become attached, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating becoming weary of and dispassionate towards the things which the mind has desired and to which it has become attached, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: In this connection, it should be recognized that there are two kinds of freedom (*virāga*): (1) the freedom that is detachment from compound things, all of which are but fleeting and evanescent, and (2) *nibbāna*, the absolute or ultimate freedom. The former is the insight that is a guide to the latter, and he who practices mindfulness of breathing, while recognizing both kinds of freedom, is so described: "constantly contemplating becoming weary of and dispassionate towards the things which the mind has desired and to which it has become attached, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating becoming weary of and dispassionate towards the things which the mind has desired and to which it has become attached, I shall breathe out."

> **Step 15:** *"One trains oneself: constantly contemplating cessation, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating cessation, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: This cessation is of two kinds: (1) the momentary and (2) the absolute. The momentary cessation implies the gradual elimination of the cankers (*āsavas*) ([1] sensual desire [*kāma*]; [2] becoming [*bhāva*] — the desire to be reborn in the realms of form or in the formless realms [*rūpa*, *arūpa bhāva*]; [3] false views [*micchā-diṭṭhi* or simply *diṭṭhi*]; and [4] ignorance [*avijjā*]) at different stages of the practice. The absolute or ultimate cessation is *nibbāna*, the final goal. Realizing both kinds of cessation, the practitioner trains himself in the practice of mindfulness of breathing.

> **Step 16:** *"One trains oneself: constantly contemplating the abandonment of mental impurities, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating abandonment of mental impurities, I shall breathe out."*

COMMENTS: First, insight, in the course of its gradual development, causes the giving up, or abandonment, of mental impurities and, with them, the forces that cause the aggregates to combine. Second, insight, bringing a realization of the faults of conditioned things, leads the mind towards *nibbāna*, surpassing all lesser states and attachments that are, by nature, opposed to the attainment of that sublime goal. Thus, "abandonment" (*paṭinissagga*) means both "giving up" and "surpassing" or "going beyond." This step leads to the eradication and, therefore, to the "giving up" of mental impurities and brings the mind to *nibbāna* and, thus, surpasses all worldly conditions. The practitioner who, endowed with the knowledge of this twofold abandoning, exercises

himself in breathing in and in breathing out, is he who trains himself: "constantly contemplating the abandonment of mental impurities, I shall breathe in; constantly contemplating the abandonment of mental impurities, I shall breathe out."

COMMENTS ON THE FOURTH TETRAD: The fourth tetrad of the mindfulness of breathing meditation (*ānāpānasati*) is regarded as pure insight meditation (*vipassanā*), while the preceding three tetrads are both *samatha* and *vipassanā*. Thus, the full development of *ānāpānasati-samādhi* is set forth in sixteen steps that are arranged in four tetrads, each associated with one of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), each of which is developed as an independent system of Buddhist meditation. This meditation, by itself, leads to the attainment of all that is necessary for self-enlightenment; for, according to this scheme of practice, *ānāpānasati* becomes the root from which springs the fulfillment of Knowledge and Emancipation. This is the implication of such passages as the following:

> *"Monks, this mindfulness of breathing, which one has developed and made much of, has great fruit and great benefit. This mindfulness of breathing, which one has developed and made much of, perfects the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which one has developed and made much of, perfect the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment, which one has developed and made much of, perfect Insight Knowledge and Liberation."*

Furthermore, he who has practiced this meditation is aware of the cessation of his final breathings. This means that, at the time of death, the last breathings are known and recognized by the practitioner who has practiced the subject of mindfulness of breathing, and he is able to realize that the end of his life has come. The practitioner who practices *ānāpānasati* meditation, in accordance with the methods explained above, will realize manifold advantages as its immediate results and will finally attain *nibbāna* in the state of Arahantship, or, if he wishes to defer his emancipation, in the state of Buddhahood. Therefore, the wise understand the need to apply themselves with relentless zeal to the practice of *ānāpānasati*.

♦♦♦

Ānāpānasati must be practiced one step at a time. We always start at the beginning — each meditation session starts with establishing mindfulness on the breath and then practicing step one. After we are skilled in step one, after we know it completely and can do it with ease, then, we go to step two. We practice step two until we are expert in it and have learned everything that we need to know about it. Then, we go to step three. We do not fall into the confusion of a little of step one, then, a bit of step two, then, some of this, and, then, some of that. We practice the steps one at a time, and stick with each one until we are expert in it.

Each meditation session is brand new. So, each session must begin with step one. Even if we have already mastered step one, we must still review it at the start of each session, until the knowledge of it is directly here and now, rather than mere memory. Each step must be reviewed in the same way to make sure that we are expert at it right now. Depending upon conditions (primarily internal), some sessions will get no farther than step one, and others will get as far as our overall progress. We never know until we start the session. Without expectations, we practice step by step, seeing what happens and learning what we can.

This is merely the way things are. Each step depends upon the previous steps. The conditions for step five are the completion of steps one through four. We are ready for step ten only when we have gone through the first nine steps successfully. Once we accept things as they are, we can stop desiring that they be otherwise. By accepting the progressive nature of the practice, we can proceed wisely, without impatience, boredom, and frustration. ■

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The Seven Stages Of Purification[783]

"Those who are wise, leaving craving behind and having nibbāna as their goal, should abandon evil ways[784] *and cultivate pure, good ones.*[785] *They should seek delight in solitude, detachment, and nibbāna, which an ordinary person finds so difficult to enjoy. They should also abandon sense pleasures and, clinging to nothing, should cleanse themselves of all impurities*[786] *of the mind."*[787]

The Purpose of Following the Teachings

One of the most transformational insights that arises as a result of practicing the principles outlined in the *Visuddhimagga* is the realization of the inherent lawfulness of the purification process. When the causes and conditions that lead to spiritual purification are intentionally cultivated, spiritual liberation (*vimokkha*) naturally follows. The teachings in the *Visuddhimagga* act as a map that describes with great precision the specific mental factors leading to spiritual purification (*visuddhi*). They also provide a comprehensive description of the purifications to which these mental factors lead.

In the Theravādin Buddhist tradition, the ultimate spiritual goal is the realization of *nibbāna* — a transcendent reality that exists beyond the laws of cause and effect. Although *nibbāna* cannot be realized without having completed the purification process, *nibbāna* does not arise as a result of the process. *Nibbāna* is a self-subsistent reality that

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[783] This chapter is adapted, in part, from Matthew Flickstein, *Swallowing the River Ganges: A Practice Guide to the Path of Purification* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [2001]) and, in part, from Rewata Dhamma, Chapter 6: The Seven Stages of Purification, in *The First Discourse of the Buddha* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1997]), pp. 71—79.

[784] Physical misconduct, and so forth.

[785] Wise *Bhikkhus* should develop the bright *Dhamma*, in all its varieties, such as physical good conduct, and so forth, from the time of going forth into the Holy Life (*brahmacariya*) up until reaching the Path of Arahantship.

[786] The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*): (1) desire for gratification of the senses (*kāmacchanda*); (2) ill will, hatred, anger, aversion (*vyāpāda*); (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*); (4) restlessness, worry, agitation (*uddhacca-kukkucca*); and (5) skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*).

[787] *Dhammapada*, VI, The Wise, verses 87—88.

is not the result of anything. By following the Path of Purification, we merely eradicate the delusions and perceptual distortions that prevent us from discerning this ultimate truth.

In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the middle-length discourses of the *Buddha*, there is a narrative entitled the "The Relay Chariots" (Rathavinīta Sutta, no. 24). In this discourse, Sāriputta, one of the *Buddha's* chief disciples, and Venerable Puṇṇa Mantāṇiputta are discussing the path that leads to the realization of *nibbāna*. During their conversation, the following stages of purification are mentioned:

1. Purification of Virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*);
2. Purification of Mind (*citta-visuddhi*);
3. Purification of View (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*);
4. Purification by Overcoming Doubt (*kankhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*);
5. Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What Is the Path and What Is not the Path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*);
6. Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*); and
7. Purification by Knowledge and Vision (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*).

These stages of purification, however, are not elaborated upon anywhere in the *Buddha's* discourses. The main source for uncovering their precise meaning is the *Visuddhimagga* (literally, the "Path of Purification"). The *Visuddhimagga* is a detailed Commentary on the teachings of the *Buddha*. It was written by Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, a fifth-century CE Monk (*Bhikkhu*) who lived in Śri Lanka.

The purity to be attained at each stage of purification is manifested when we eradicate the unwholesome (*akusala*) mental factors that oppose its arising. Purification of Virtue is obtained by abstaining from unskillful speech and conduct, adhering to the principles of Right Livelihood, using our material goods wisely, and guarding our sense doors. Purification of Mind is secured by ridding our mind of the hindrances to concentration. Purification of View is gained by eliminating wrong views, especially the view that there is a permanent self (*attā*) at the core of our being. Purification by Overcoming Doubt is obtained by realizing the conditioned nature of the entire phenomenal world, including our "subjective" experience of it. Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What Is the Path and What Is not the Path is generated by overcoming our attachment to the alluring experiences that arise in the course of practicing insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way is achieved by aligning the mind with the factors of enlightenment that lead to our realization of *nibbāna*. Purification by Knowledge and Vision is obtained when the mental defilements (*kilesa*) are eradicated as the supramundane paths (*lokuttara-magga*) are attained.

The following table lists the Seven Stages of Purification (*satta-visuddhi*) and some of the essential practices that, when cultivated, enable us to realize each of the purifications:

STAGES OF PURIFICATION AND RELATED PRACTICES

Stage of Purification	Related Practices
1. Purification of Virtue	Ethical principles of living (*sīla*)
2. Purification of Mind	Development of concentration (*samādhi*)
3. Purification of View	Initial insight training (*vipassanā*)
4. Purification by Overcoming Doubt	Mindfulness of the body and feelings
5. Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What Is the Path and What Is not the Path	Mindfulness of consciousness and *dhammas*
6. Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way	Choiceless awareness
7. Purification by Knowledge and Vision	Focus on impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), or selflessness (*anattā*) as a doorway to the unconditioned (*nibbāna*)

The realization of each stage of purification naturally leads to the unfolding of the next. During the purification process, we experience a sequence of sixteen insights, which counter sixteen erroneous views. These insights start to arise at the stage of Purification of View, when we begin the practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). With the attainment of *nibbāna*, our minds are in direct relation to the seventh and last purification, Purification by Knowledge and Vision. The key insight associated with this final stage of purification is referred to as the knowledge of the supramundane paths (*lokuttara-magga*).

Stage One: Purification of Virtue

To reach the pinnacle of spiritual realization, we must align every aspect of our lives with that goal. To do so, our spiritual practice must go beyond the time we devote to formal meditation (*bhāvanā*). When the true scope of practice is not recognized, we risk engaging in behaviors that produce results inconsistent with our spiritual goals and sabotage the possibility of realizing the deeper stages of spiritual purification.

When there is no separation between our practice and our day-to-day lives, our spiritual progress is accelerated. We can more readily penetrate the delusions (*moha*) that obstruct our capacity to recognize the true nature of experience. These delusions are perceptual distortions that reside in the mind and express themselves through our words, thoughts, and deeds.

Purification of Virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*) refers to the examination and, where appropriate, modification of our physical actions and interpersonal communication in order to prevent the manifestation of mental defilements through their grosser forms of expression. This process entails rigorously observing the moral precepts prescribed by

the *Buddha*, engaging in right forms of livelihood, cultivating a wise attitude toward the use of our material goods, and keeping vigilant guard at the sense doors.

There are five basic precepts, or principles of living, that the *Buddha* prescribed for everyone. These precepts are a guide to behaviors that are either to be avoided, because they lead to unfortunate consequences, or to be cultivated, because they support spiritual development. By following these precepts, our actions and speech are aligned with those of enlightened beings. This alignment helps to foster states of mind that lead to the realization of ultimate truth (*paramattha-sacca*). As we will discover, the precepts reflect a depth of spiritual practice that may not be initially apparent.

The Five Precepts (*pañca-sīla*):

1. Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi.	1. I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking life.
2. Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi.	2. I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking what is not freely given.
3. Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi.	3. I undertake the training rule to abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi.	4. I undertake the training rule to abstain from false speech.
5. Surā-meraya-majja pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṁ samādiyāmi.	5. I undertake the training rule to abstain from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness.

Traditionally, the observance of these Five Precepts is considered adequate for lay practitioners striving to achieve the moral purity necessary to undertake *vipassanā* meditation. Buddhist Monks, on the other hand, are required to observe 227 disciplinary rules (*patimokkhasaṁvara-sīla*), while Buddhist Nuns must follow an additional set of rules. The morality of restraining the senses (*indriyasaṁvara-sīla*), the morality of pure livelihood (*ājīvapārisuddhi-sīla*), and the morality of the proper use of requisites (*paccayasannissita-sīla*) are essential precepts required by the practitioner in order to control the senses for higher morality and to discipline the mind.

Stage Two: Purification of Mind

The Purification of Virtue (*sīla-visuddhi*), as with all intentional actions, functions as both a cause and an effect. As a cause, it is responsible for changing our attitudes and behaviors. We begin to follow specific ethical guidelines and to cultivate a quality of mind that enables us to skillfully respond to our moment-to-moment sensory experiences.

As an effect, the Purification of Virtue manifests as states of mind unstained by thoughts or feelings of remorse. As a result of committing unwholesome (*akusala*) actions or of not committing wholesome (*kusala*) ones, a mind not purified through virtue frequently experiences a nagging sense of guilt. A mind thus filled with regret cannot

fully concentrate, which is a necessary prerequisite for the Purification of Mind (*citta-visuddhi*).

In practicing insight meditation, we focus on the impermanent, conditioned, and selfless nature of our experience. Instead of excluding everything from our focus except for the main object of our attention, as we do with *samatha* meditation, we utilize every object of consciousness as an opportunity to generate insight. Rather than sinking into the experience of a single object, such as the breath, we ride the crest of the waves of our experiences as they unfurl from moment to moment.

When we first begin meditation, we typically find it very difficult to control the mind and to concentrate on an object. The mind wanders, and thoughts frequently arise, because the mind is not yet fully purified. We feel that there is no progress in our practice. In order to make progress, we must achieve purity of mind (*citta-visuddhi*) by developing one of the following three concentrations: (1) momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*), (2) access, or neighborhood, concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), or (3) absorption, or attainment, concentration (*appanā samādhi*). Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration are grouped together as "concentration" (*samādhi*) in the Noble Eightfold Path. These three factors must be developed in order to purify the mind, which is otherwise perpetually inclined towards sense objects. Once a sense object arises in the senses, we react with liking or disliking. This brings about thoughts that cause the arising of impurities. Sometimes, there may be no liking or disliking and no defilements, but there are interruptions that become hindrances to the practice. We should develop concentration to purify the mind.

For the meditator who practices *vipassanā* meditation with momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*), awareness arises objectively and precisely on many different successive objects. At this level, there is no reflexive thinking about the object. There is only bare awareness as the mind concentrates upon the object. When the mind becomes free from mental hindrances and awareness arises uninterruptedly with its respective objects, then concentration is established, along with purity of mind. The development of *vipassanā* insight may then make progress.

Stage Three: Purification of View

After developing sufficient concentration to calm the mind and temporarily suppress the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), we are ready to shift our focus to the cultivation of insight (*vipassanā*). The heart of insight practice is investigating and ultimately eradicating the deeply held belief that there is a permanent and substantial core at the root of our personality around which the attributes of our body and mind cluster. This assumption, or idea, of a tangible entity that lies at the base of our experience is typically referred to as "I," "me," or "myself," or, in more abstract terms, as the "self," or "ego."

Upon deep investigation, we come to realize that what actually exists is an impermanent and selfless process that rises and falls according to causes and conditions. This process consists of five interdependent factors that are continually in flux. These

factors are known as the Five Aggregates of Clinging (*upādānakkhandha*), because we cling to them with desire and with the erroneous view that they comprise a substantial self. These Five Aggregates are: (1) matter, corporeality, or material form (*rūpa*); (2) feelings (*vedanā*); (3) perceptions (*saññā*); (4) (predisposing) mental formations (*saṁkhāra*); and (5) consciousness (*viññāṇa*).

Purification of View (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*) arises as a direct result of practicing insight meditation. This practice enables us to clearly recognize the impermanent (*anicca*) and selfless (*anattā*) nature of the Five Aggregates.

The meditator endowed with purity of mind begins by observing mental and material processes in each moment, understanding the mind and body analytically. While concentrating on breathing, we come to distinguish between the in-breath and the out-breath and become aware that the interval between the in-breath and its awareness and the out-breath and its awareness arise as different processes. In this way, we come to recognize, through direct experience, that each mental and material state is a different process. The same logic applies in the case of other sense functions. For example, when seeing a visual object, we know to distinguish each single factor involved in the visual process. The eye, the visual object, seeing, and awareness are all perceived as distinct factors in the visual process. By observing each of these, we can analyze mental and material states according to their true essential nature. This is called "analytical knowledge of mind and body" (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*). When this knowledge has come to maturity, we understand that there is no essential unchanging self, or essence, in any mental or material process. This is called Purification of View.

> *No doer of the deeds is found,*
> *No one who ever reaps their fruits;*
> *Empty phenomena roll on:*
> *This alone is the correct view.*[788]

THE INSIGHT KNOWLEDGES: As we continue practicing insight meditation, we will eventually experience sixteen specific insights (*mahā-vipassanā*), which are referred to as insight knowledges. These insight knowledges define which stage of purification we have achieved. The knowledge of the delimitation of mind and matter is what demarcates the Purification of View (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*).

Each insight knowledge arises as a direct experience and does not occur through reasoning or by "searching" for an insight. When the appropriate causes and conditions arise, insights naturally follow. The knowledge of the delimitation of mind and matter has arisen as a consequence of purifying our virtue and mind, and by applying the principles of insight meditation to the observation of our breath.

[788] *Visuddhimagga*.

THE SIXTEEN INSIGHT KNOWLEDGES

1. The knowledge of the delimitation of mind and matter.
2. The knowledge of conditionality.
3. The knowledge of comprehension.
4. The knowledge of arising and falling away.
5. The knowledge of dissolution.
6. The knowledge of the fearful.
7. The knowledge of danger.
8. The knowledge of disenchantment.
9. The knowledge of desire for deliverance.
10. The knowledge of re-observation.
11. The knowledge of equanimity toward formations.
12. The knowledge of conformity with truth.
13. The knowledge of change of lineage.
14. The knowledge of the path.
15. The knowledge of fruition.
16. The knowledge of reviewing.

Stage Four: Purification by Overcoming Doubt

Although we are beginning to recognize that there is no self as part of our experience, it is natural to continue to have doubts about how the Five Aggregates can function without a self directing the process. These doubts are resolved when we realize the knowledge of conditionality and have, therefore, reached the stage referred to as Purification by Overcoming Doubt (*kankhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*). This stage of purification arises when the specific causes and conditions responsible for the ongoing functioning of the Five Aggregates are understood. We overcome doubts such as: "Have I existed in the past? Shall I exist in the future? Do I exist now? Do I not exist now?" The understanding of Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), of *kamma*, and of rebirth are also included here.

> *"Whosoever wishes to escape from doubt should be attentive and alert, and should perceive the cause and origin of both mind and body."*[789]

As our concentration and knowledge develop, we realize cause and effect while observing mind and body. For example, when changing the sitting position, we realize that there is an intention that precedes the act. When stretching a limb, there is first the intention to stretch the limb. We distinguish between cause and effect in each moment. This is the insight that distinguishes between cause and effect (*paccaya-pariggha-ñāṇa*).

[789] *Paṭisambhidāmagga* 2.62.

As time passes, we come to experience various painful feelings in the body. Just as awareness of one feeling arises, another arises somewhere else. We follow each feeling as it arises, and we become aware of it. But, although we are engaged in watching these feelings as they arise, only their initial phase of "arising" is perceived and not their final phase of dissolution. Similarly, as mental images arise, the act of awareness is noticed, but not their moment of dissolution. In this way, we understand and realize that all mental and material processes are conditioned or conditioning. Apart from these, there is no person or self who performs or governs this phenomenal world. This is called the "Purification of Insight by Overcoming Doubt."

Stage Five: Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What is the Path and What is Not the Path

As we continue our practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) and our knowledge of conditionality comes to maturity, we reach a new stage in our spiritual development. At this point, two additional insight knowledges begin to emerge: (1) knowledge by comprehension and (2) knowledge of arising and passing away.

Knowledge by comprehension (*sammasana*) is the continued recognition that each moment of consciousness, along with its corresponding object, is impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and selfless (*anattā*). We have already been observing these three characteristics, which are inherent to all phenomena, but our ability to identify their presence now encompasses a wider scope of objects and reaches a more profound level of development.

The knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa*), the next knowledge to unfold, has two specific phases. The initial phase occurs as part of the Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What Is the Path and What Is not the Path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) and will eventually come to maturity during the next stage of spiritual development, the Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*). During the initial phase of the knowledge of arising and passing away, the realization that every aspect of our experience appears and disappears according to specific causes and conditions deeply impresses itself upon the mind. Although we have already been examining the conditioned nature of our experience, at this point, we are able to view the process with a clarity not previously available to us.

As these knowledges continue to unfold, we begin to experience some of the more profound benefits of insight meditation. The deep meaning of statements spoken by the *Buddha* or by our spiritual mentors may become completely clear. A profound sense of happiness and calm may be realized. An overwhelming enthusiasm for continuing the practice may arise along with a desire to live in a meditation center. The ability to stay mindfully present with whatever arises from moment to moment may become effortless.

The arising of these knowledges, insights, and experiences is an indication that our practice is maturing. However, these same experiences can become a barrier to

further spiritual development. This occurs when we identify with the experiences, become attached to them, or believe that they are signs that we have become enlightened. If identification, attachment, or such a belief occurs, we are off the path, and the experiences are regarded as corruptions of insight. When we begin to realize, either through self-discovery or as a result of working with a teacher, that we have been grasping at these experiences and have not been treating them as impermanent objects of awareness, the understanding places us back on the true path. When this occurs, we have reached the stage of development referred to as the Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What Is the Path and What Is not the Path. Practicing the contemplations associated with mindfulness of consciousness and mindfulness of *dhammas*, as they are described in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, supports our efforts to reach this present stage of spiritual purification.

THE TEN CORRUPTIONS OF INSIGHT: There are ten corruptions of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*): (1) illumination (*obhāsa*); (2) knowledge (*ñāṇa*); (3) rapture (*pīti*); (4) tranquility (*passaddhi*); (5) happiness (*sukha*); (6) determination, or resolution (*adhimokkha*); (7) energy (*paggaha*, *paggāha*); (8) assurance (*upaṭṭhāna*); (9) equanimity (*upekkhā*); and (10) attachment (*nikanti*). These corruptions arise in no particular order, and not every meditator will encounter or even notice the presence of each one.

1. The perception of an illumination (*obhāsa*), or of a bright light, may be seen with our eyes open or closed. It may appear similar to a locomotive headlight or to the light that emanates from a powerful lamp. We may even perceive this light as issuing from our own body. We may become fascinated with the light and not want to watch it rise and fall as simply another object of awareness.

2. Knowledge (*ñāṇa*), or the understanding of aspects of *Dhamma* that we did not fully understand in the past, may now become clear to us. The meaning of specific terms, the understanding of how aspects of the path integrate, the comprehension of Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), and other difficult concepts, may now be easily understood. We may feel that our mind is in accord with our teacher's mind, and the desire to begin teaching may arise. We may even believe that our level of attainment has surpassed that of our teacher, and disagreements with him or her may ensue.

3. The experience of rapture (*pīti*), or ecstasy, may be overwhelming. Any of the five grades of rapture (minor, momentary, showering, uplifting, or pervading) that arise as aspects of the first jhānic absorption, may become prominent. It may be difficult for us to just watch the experience of rapture rise and fall. We may even believe that we have reached the end of the path and consequently stop practicing.

4. Although the experience of a deep and penetrating tranquility (*passaddhi*), or calm, may have arisen at various times throughout our practice, the feelings of bodily and

mental peace that occur at this stage are more pervasive and profound. The body is cool and comfortable, and the mind is relaxed. Each movement of the body and mind is effortless, and the process of noticing the rise and fall of all phenomena proceeds smoothly. We may become content with this significant experience of tranquility and not desire to forgo it for the sake of cultivating additional insight.

5. A profound sense of happiness (*sukha*), or joy, may arise. At this stage, the experience of happiness feels all-encompassing, since it is present even during times when we are not engaged in formal meditation. We may believe that this is the happiness for which we have been searching, and we may want to communicate to everyone what we are feeling. A deep sense of gratitude for the teacher may arise. The experience of intense and overwhelming rapture, calm, or happiness is the result of an imbalance between effort and concentration, with too much focus on concentration.

6. We may experience exceptional faith in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*. This strong sense of faith, devotion, or inspiration may even bring us to tears. Gratitude and a strong desire to support the teacher or the meditation center may surface. Great determination (*adhimokkha*) to continue the practice may arise; we may even have thoughts of ordaining or remaining at the meditation center until the final stages of purification are achieved. Faith will need to be balanced by discernment, or discrimination, for the further stages of insight to occur.

7. A powerful energy (*paggaha* or *paggāha*) may arise, and, with it, an absence of any sleepiness, or lethargic feelings. We may be able to meditate for extended periods of time without difficulty, noticing the object of concentration with balanced effort. We may believe that this energy is a permanent condition and fail to recognize its conditioned and impermanent nature.

8. Assurance (*upaṭṭhāna*) may arise without any apparent effort on our part. It is almost as if mindfulness reaches toward the objects that arise to consciousness under its own power. We may believe that there is no condition of mind that will arise of which we will not be mindful. We may be deceived, thinking that enlightenment has been reached, since we have perfect mindfulness. However, for additional insight knowledges to be realized, mindfulness itself needs to be seen with mindfulness.

9. With the arising of equanimity (*upekkhā*), comes an ease in discerning the three characteristics of experience. This is not the type of equanimity known as a neutral feeling. In this context, equanimity is the ability of the mind to penetrate every formation that arises without effort. The true nature of each formation immediately becomes apparent. We may, at this point, believe that all defilements (*kilesa*) have been eradicated and decide to stop practicing. In actuality, the defilements have only

been suppressed. Wrong view (*diṭṭhi* or *micchā-diṭṭhi*) remains until the very last stage of purification is reached.

10. The final corruption of insight is attachment (*nikanti*), which may arise as a result of the delight we derive from the profound occurrences we experience. We may not recognize the very subtle attachments we have developed and may believe that the experiences result from a supramundane attainment. This becomes a barrier to further practice and spiritual development. It is the presence of this attachment that is the deciding factor as to whether these experiences are to be considered corruptions of insight.

Although there are meditators who can undergo these experiences and not mistakenly believe that they herald the attainment of enlightenment, it is rare for a meditator not to form a subtle attachment to one or all of them. Through the earnest application of mindfulness, or through the interaction with a skilled teacher, it becomes apparent that attachment to these experiences is not the path. When we can look upon these experiences as merely phenomena that rise and fall based upon causes and conditions, when we see that they exhibit the same three characteristics of all experience, we have finally reached the stage of the Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What Is the Path and What Is not the Path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*).

Stage Six: Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way

Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way (*paṭipadā-ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) is the last stage of spiritual development prior to the direct realization of *nibbāna* — the unconditioned reality. It is rich with insights and profound spiritual experiences. The preceding stages of purification enabled us to intermittently recognize the specific attributes and universal characteristics of each experience. The knowledges associated with this stage of purification work toward eliminating the erroneous views that obscure our ability to see things as they really are on a more consistent basis.

Although there are nine insight knowledges associated with this stage of purification, more than twice as many as any other stage, we can experience all nine of them within moments of each other. It is an auspicious time when environmental, psychological, and spiritual causes and conditions coalesce in such a way that these profound knowledges begin to arise. We need to recognize this precious opportunity, maintain vigilance, and increase our effort in order to take full advantage of this rare set of circumstances.

Some of the insights that arise during this stage can be quite frightening, and it may feel as though we are actually losing our grip on reality rather than gaining a more secure one. Many of the insights may dramatically shift our point of view and cause confusion about the way to integrate our new perspective with our day-to-day lives. Without the guidance of a teacher or a thorough familiarity with what is actually

occurring, some of the insights may cause us to temporarily back away from practice instead of pursuing it with more diligence.

At the beginning of our practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), we used the breath (or another object from the Four Foundations of Mindfulness) as the primary focus of our awareness. Whenever the mind strayed from this primary object, we noticed the impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and selfless (*anattā*) nature of the new object and then gently but firmly returned to our breath. We used the primary object as an anchor that kept our awareness centered on what was occurring during each present moment. At this stage in our spiritual development, however, this practice technique has a significant drawback.

The purpose of insight meditation is to see things as they really are. In order for this to happen, we need to be choicelessly aware of whatever arises, without grasping or resisting any of our experiences. Whenever we have an intention to move our awareness in a particular direction (back to the breath, for example), we are subtly manipulating the mind by creating an intention, and we are no longer choicelessly aware of what is occurring.

At this point in our practice, we no longer attend to any primary object. We just remain choicelessly aware of whatever arises to consciousness. Our prior work will now bear its greatest fruit. By intentionally having investigated the various aspects of the Five Aggregates (*pañcakkhandha* or, simply, *khandha*), our mind will be less inclined to find interest in any of the phenomena it experiences. Since we are not grasping or resisting our sensory experiences, they will appear to arise and dissolve with remarkable speed. This recognition will enable us to gain deeper insights into the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and selfless nature of all conditioned phenomena.

In order for us to meditate in this manner, our momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*) needs to be well developed. It requires that we stay present with the waves of sensory experience as they incessantly break on the shore of our consciousness. If, during this practice, our mind loses its balance and gets swept away with what is being experienced, we return to using the breath as an anchor until our momentary concentration has regained its stability. Once that occurs, we let go of the breath, once again remaining choicelessly present with whatever is occurring.

As we continue to practice, the watching of arising and dissolving of our sensory experiences becomes accurate and mature, keen and strong. We then perceive only two factors in each moment — (1) object and (2) awareness. While giving attention to these, we become aware that every factor is dissolving. For instance, when hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, or thinking, dissolution and not arising becomes prominent. This is the arising of the insight of dissolution (*bhanga-ñāṇa*). With the development of the insight of dissolution, awareness of fear arises in the wake of the constant and rapid dissolution of all processes. This is insight with the awareness of fearfulness (*bhaya-ñāṇa*). Perceiving the rapid dissolution of all psychophysical phenomena, we see them as undesirable and harmful. This is the insight of misery (*ādinava-ñāṇa*). Psychophysical manifestation is regarded as insubstantial, devoid of pleasure, and tiresome. This is the insight of disgust (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*). These latter three insights are combined together as a

single insight. Therefore, some meditators may experience only one or two of these insights.

As we experience all the processes of mind and body — fearfulness (*bhaya*), misery (*ādinava*), and disgust (*nibbidā*) —, a desire arises to renounce this mind-body complex. This is the insight of desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*). Thereupon, we make a strong determination and effort to develop awareness and concentration. All the processes of physical and mental elements become calm and balanced. Painful feelings disappear. Awareness arises smoothly and spontaneously, and equanimity continues for a longer time than previously experienced. This is the insight of "equanimity of formations" (*saṁkharupekkhā-ñāṇa*).

With the maturing of insight, awareness becomes sharp, occurring two or three times rapidly and without any special effort. This last stage is called "insight leading to emergence" (*vuṭṭhāna-gāminī*), or "insight of adaptation" (*anuloma-ñāṇa*). *Viṭṭhanā* means the Noble Path that ascends to and glimpses *nibbanā*. *Gāminī* means the special insight that proceeds to the Noble Path. *Anuloma-ñāṇa* is the last of the *vipassanā* insights that occur in the progression of *vipassanā* insights and the Noble Path. If we experience this last *vipassanā* insight, it is called "Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way" (*paṭipadāñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*). Immediately afterwards, a kind of insight arises that falls, as it were, for the first time into *nibbāna*, which is void of formations, inasmuch as it is the cessation of them. This is called maturity insight (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*). *Gotrabhū* literally means "one who has become of the lineage." In other words, by attaining that insight, we move from the worldling (*puthujjana*) lineage to that of the Noble Ones (*ariya*).

Stage Seven: Purification by Knowledge and Vision

Purification by Knowledge and Vision (*ñāṇadassana-visuddhi*) is the final stage of the purification process. It is our unwavering dedication to impeccable virtue (*sīla*), deep concentration (*samādhi*), and the consistent practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) that has brought us to this significant point in our spiritual development. It is rare indeed that someone approaches the end of the "worldling" (*puthujjana*) designation and has the opportunity to become a "Noble One" (*ariya*).

After the insight of adaptation (*anuloma-ñāṇa*), maturity insight, and path and fruition insights follow in succession. The path insight lasts only for a fleeting moment and realizes the cessation of all processes of conditioning. The insight of fruition is followed by two or three insights of retrospection (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*) that contemplate the path of *vipassanā* and the path of the Noble Ones. Path insight, which signifies Purification by Knowledge and Vision (*ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*), and fruition insight are insights of a Stream-Winner (*sotāpanna*). The Stream-Winner is one who enters the stream of the Noble Path for the first time, thereby overcoming the concept of an everlasting self, doubts about the path or teachings, and adherence to wrong rites and rituals. The Stream-Winner has become free from rebirth in any of the lower realms of

existence.

The individual who wishes to attain higher insights and stages of enlightenment should make an effort to develop *vipassanā* insights beginning with the insight of arising and dissolution (*udayabbayānupassanā-ñāṇa*). This will lead to higher paths and fruition insights through which one eradicates the remaining fetters (*saṁyojana*). The final stage arrived at is that of the *Arahant*. For the *Arahant*, there can be no further rounds of rebirth in *saṁsāra*.

Profound Knowledge

For one practicing *vipassanā* meditation, in order to attain the Noble Path, it is necessary to develop three kinds of profound knowledge (*pariññā*) in the progress of meditation stages: (1) full understanding of the known (*ñāta-pariññā*); (2) full understanding of investigating, or judging (*tiraṇa-pariññā*); and (3) full understanding as abandoning (*pahāna-pariññā*). These may be explained as follows:

1. Full understanding of the known (*ñāta-pariññā*): When one observes physical and mental processes with awareness and concentration, they are seen precisely, from moment to moment, without concepts. For example, if a visible object arises at the eye base, it is recognized only as seeing (not as a particular visual object such as, for example, a tree, or a chair, or a table, or whatever). In the next moment, if a sound is heard, it is recognized only as hearing (not as a particular sound such as, for example, a clap, a voice, or whatever). If attention is focused on the body, only the qualities of heaviness, lightness, heat, cold, or motion are noticed. If smells or tastes are experienced, they are recognized only as smelling or tasting. If thoughts arise, they are recognized only as thinking. In this way, the meditator discerns mental and physical phenomena in their true nature. This is called "full understanding of the known" (*ñāta-pariññā*).

2. Full understanding of investigating, or judging (*tiraṇa-pariññā*): If the meditator observes whatever mental and material processes arise in the mind or body objectively, he or she realizes their true nature (*tathatā*) as impermanent, suffering, and void of a permanent self, or soul. There are two kinds of impermanence: (1) radical change (*aññathābhāva*) and (2) subsequent change (*vipariṇāma*). A change from one stage to another, or from one situation to another, is "radical change," while moment-to-moment changing is "subsequent change." The meditator realizes that all phenomena are nothing other than ever-changing processes. There is no moment, no instant, when the changing stops. All phenomena are seen as suffering and clearly understood as devoid of soul, or self. In other words, the meditator sees *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anattā*. This profound knowledge is called "full understanding of investigating, or judging" (*tiraṇa-pariññā*).

3. Full understanding as abandoning (*pahāna-pariññā*): When the meditator's understanding of the three characteristics of all physical and mental phenomena becomes profound, there then develops a full understanding that enables him or her to dispel distortions (*vipallāsa*), or erroneous observations; that is, taking that which is true to be false and that which is false to be true. There are three kinds of distortions: (1) distortions of perception; (2) distortions of thought; and (3) distortions of view. One erroneously perceives, thinks, and views impermanence as permanence, impurity as purity, suffering as happiness, and selflessness as self. If the meditator perfectly discerns the true nature of the phenomenal world, these distortions become dispelled.

The Threefold Path

The threefold path consists of: (1) the basic path (*mūla-magga*); (2) the preliminary path (*pubba-bhāga-magga*); and (3) the Noble Path (*ariya-magga*).

THE BASIC PATH: The basic path includes the right understanding of *kamma*, the establishment of morality (*sīla*), and the accomplishment of concentration (*samādhi*). The meditator should accomplish one of the following three kinds of meditation before the practice of *vipassanā* insight meditation: (1) momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*); (2) access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*); or (3) absorption concentration (*appanā-samādhi*). The concentrated mind dispels mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), so that Purification of Mind may be achieved. This basic path is an essential part of the practice.

THE PRELIMINARY PATH: *Vipassanā* practice is the application of the Noble Eightfold Path, but it is only the preliminary path before the meditator practices *vipassanā* by observing physical and mental processes within the Five Aggregates of Clinging, which are misunderstood as a self or being.

As the meditator develops awareness and concentration, his or her understanding of insight develops, and he or she realizes these processes as they really are. The meditator experiences the insight stages accordingly. Whenever the meditator is engaged in meditation, there are five factors of the Noble Eightfold Path present; three from the concentration group (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration) and two from the wisdom group (Right Understanding and Right Thought). These five factors are simultaneously involved in each moment of awareness and knowing. They are called the working paths (*kāraka-magga*). In addition, there are also involved the remaining three factors of the morality group (Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood), which preserve the Precepts through abstention. For example, when the meditator sees or hears any mental or physical object arising, awareness arises with each process without liking or disliking, and he or she understands the true nature of these processes as impermanent, suffering, and devoid of self. Thus, Right Understanding and Right Thought arise in each moment as do Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration, upon which Right Understanding and Right Thought are dependent. When an intention arises to

speak falsely or to commit wrong action, the meditator is aware of it at that precise moment, and so he or she abstains from wrong speech, wrong action, and wrong livelihood. In this way, the meditator applies the Noble Eightfold Path as the preliminary path during *vipassanā*.

> *"The view of such a person is the right view; his thoughts are right thoughts; his efforts are right efforts; his mindfulness is right mindfulness; his concentration is right concentration. Even before he starts meditation, the meditator is well established in right speech, right action, and right livelihood. It is in this way that the meditator becomes established in the Noble Eightfold Path."*[790]

KNOWLEDGE OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS BY VIPASSANĀ: It is only by contemplating the truth of *dukkha* that the Noble Eightfold Path can be developed and the cause of suffering and craving eradicated. Only when the *vipassanā* path is accomplished can *nibbāna* be realized. Having seen the true nature of impermanence, suffering, and emptiness of selfhood in each process, craving for these processes disappears. This is momentary eradication of craving, the truth of the origin of suffering. With the cessation of craving, momentary *nibbāna*, or *nirodha*, is achieved by means of *vipassanā*. When comprehension of the Four Noble Truths becomes fully mature, the Noble Path appears, and *nibbāna* is realized. The preliminary Noble Eightfold Path is transcended, and the supramundane state of the Noble Path is realized. The insight of knowledge developed within *vipassanā* is discursive knowledge, which has been developed by observing sense objects that arise at the sense bases. The insight of the Noble Path does not have any sense object but is the realization of the Four Noble Truths.

REALIZATION OF THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS BY THE NOBLE PATH: At the culmination of *vipassanā* insight, the cessation of craving (*nirodha*) is realized. *Nibbāna* is the cessation of craving, sufferings, and all conditioned things. Once the meditator has experienced the cessation of *dukkha* and realized its peace, he or she comprehends that all conditioned states are *dukkha*. Having recognized them as suffering, there is no longer any craving for them. The origin of suffering (*samudaya*), that is, craving (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*), is abandoned, and the Noble Eightfold Path becomes fully developed.

VIPASSANĀ AND THE NOBLE PATH: The Noble Path (*ariya-magga*) may be given the full title "the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the cessation of suffering," because it leads to the cessation of all formations (*saṁkhāra*). But the Noble Path itself, without the *vipassanā* path, cannot lead to the attainment of *nibbāna* where all sufferings cease. In accordance with one's previous perfections (*pāramitā*), one has to practice *vipassanā* for one's own liberation (*vimokkha*). The Noble Path arises as if it had emerged out of the *vipassanā* path itself. It is for this reason that the *vipassanā* path is called the preliminary path to the Noble Path, which is the ultimate goal. The Noble Eightfold Path is a

[790] *Majjhima Nikāya.*

supramundane path, which cannot arise without first following the preliminary *vipassanā* path. Therefore, the Noble Path, together with the preliminary *vipassanā* path, is called the "path leading to the cessation of suffering" (*dukkha-nirodha-gāmiṇī-paṭipadā*).

Living an Enlightened Life

Everything that arises disappears; whatever is born dies. Nothing escapes the cycle of birth and death (*saṁsāra*). It is important for us to directly and experientially realize that there is never a point in time when something "exists" and is not in the process of becoming something other than it was just a moment before. All suffering comes from attachment — trying to hold on to that which is perpetually changing —, and all attachment comes from delusion (*moha*). We need to learn to live in the clarity and space of non-attachment, neither grasping nor pushing anything away. The key is to just be present with what arises from moment to moment without holding or resisting. At the same time, it is essential not to fall into the trap of denying the relative existence of the Five Aggregates and the world of experience they present.

Compassion (*karuṇā*) is the willingness to play in the field of dreams even though you are awake. Approach life with joy, enthusiasm, love, and an open heart. Take delight in the manifestations of life: it is all a play of consciousness, and it is really all play. If something appears serious or burdensome — even death —, then we are lost in delusion. The "field of dreams" is this world of the senses with all its myriad forms. Being awake is the direct knowing that there is no one who suffers, no one who is born, and no one who dies. It is the Five Aggregates that are born and die. Who we are has never been born and never dies.

In actuality, there is no one who is expressing compassion to anyone else. It is all part of the play. The world is our mirror. There is only consciousness (*viññāṇa*) rising and falling along with its objects; it is all selfless (*anattā*). Whatever we see as being real is a projection of our own mind. It is where our mind is stuck or identified with the illusion.

Nothing exists the way it appears to exist — existence and non-existence are both concepts. Not holding on to anything anywhere at any time is freedom beyond measure.

We must die to each moment and allow life to express itself through us. Our lives may not turn out the way in which the ego has imagined, but when we surrender to the truth of what is, we will find freedom beyond measure as surely as the river finds its way to the sea. When we move beyond the dualistic world, there is a rebirth into the deathless. We finally come home to a place that we have really never left. ■

Further Reading

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45

Hindrances (Nīvaraṇa)

"There are these five corruptions of the heart, tainted by which the heart is neither soft, nor pliable, nor gleaming, nor easily broken up, nor perfectly composed for the destruction of the corruptions."[791]

Nīvaraṇa[792] is that which hinders one's progress or that which obstructs the path to Emancipation and celestial states. It is also explained as that which "muffles, entraps, or trammels thought."

There are five kinds of *nīvaraṇa*, or Hindrances — they are:

1. Desire for gratification of the senses (*kāmacchanda*);
2. Ill will (*vyāpāda*);
3. Sloth and Torpor (*thīna-middha*);
4. Restlessness and Worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*);
5. Doubts (*vicikicchā*).

Kāmacchanda means sense-desires or attachment to pleasurable sense-objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and contact. This is regarded as one of the Fetters (*saṁyojana*), too, that binds one to *saṁsāra*.

An average person is bound to get tempted by these alluring objects of sense. Lack of self-control results in the inevitable arising of passions. This Hindrance is inhibited by One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), which is one of the five characteristics of the *jhānas*. It is attenuated on attaining *Sakadāgāmī* and is completely eliminated on attaining *Anāgāmī*. Subtle forms of attachment such as *rūpa rāga* (attachment to the Realms of Form) and *arūpa rāga* (attachment to the Formless Realms) are eradicated only on attaining Arahantship.

The following six conditions tend to the eradication of sense-desires:

1. Perceiving the loathsomeness of the object;
2. Constant meditation on loathsomeness;
3. Sense-restraint;

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[791] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.
[792] *Nī-* + *var-* "to hinder, to obstruct."

4. Moderation in food;
5. Good friendship;
6. Profitable Talk.

Vyāpāda is ill will, or aversion. A desirable object leads to attachment, while an undesirable one leads to aversion. These are the two great fires that burn the whole world. Aided by ignorance (*avijjā*), these two produce all the sufferings in the world.

Ill will is inhibited by *pīti*, or rapture (also called "zest," or "ecstasy"), which is one of the *jhāna* factors. It is attenuated on attaining *Sakadāgāmī* and is eradicated on attaining Arahantship.

The following six conditions tend to the eradication of ill will:

1. Perceiving the object with thoughts of goodwill;
2. Constant meditation on loving-kindness (*mettā*);
3. Thinking that *kamma* is one's own;
4. Wise reflection;
5. Good friendship;
6. Profitable talk.

Thīna, or sloth, is explained as a morbid state of mind, and *middha* as a morbid state of the mental states. A stolid mind is as "inert as a bat hanging to a tree, or as molasses cleaving to a stick, or as a lump of butter too stiff for spreading." Sloth and torpor should not be understood as bodily drowsiness, because *Arahants*, who have destroyed these two mental states, still experience bodily fatigue. These two promote mental inertness and are opposed to strenuous effort (*viriya*). They are inhibited by the *jhāna* factor *vitakka*, or Initial Application, and are eradicated on attaining Arahantship.

The following six conditions tend to the eradication of sloth and torpor:

1. Reflection on the object of moderation in food;
2. Changing of bodily postures;
3. Contemplation on the object of light;
4. Living in the open;
5. Good friendship;
6. Profitable talk.

Uddhacca is mental restlessness or excitement of the mind. It is a mental state associated with all types of immoral consciousness. As a rule, an evil is done with some excitement or restlessness.

Kukkucca is worry. It is either repentance over a committed evil or over an unfulfilled good. Repentance over one's evil does not exempt one from its inevitable consequences. The best repentance is the will not to repeat that evil.

Both of these hindrances are inhibited by the *jhāna* factor *sukha*, or happiness. Restlessness is eradicated on attaining Arahantship, and worry is eradicated on attaining *Anāgāmī*.

The following six conditions tend to the eradication of these two states:

1. Erudition, or learning;
2. Discussion and questioning;
3. Understanding the nature of the *Vinaya* discipline;
4. Association with senior monks;
5. Good friendship;
6. Profitable talk.

Vicikicchā is doubt, or indecision. That which is devoid of the remedy of wisdom is *vicikicchā*.[793] It is also explained as vexation due to perplexed thinking.[794]

Here, it is not used in the sense of doubt with regard to the *Buddha*, etc., for even non-Buddhists can inhibit *vicikicchā* and gain the *jhānas*. As a Fetter, *vicikicchā*, is that doubt about the *Buddha*, etc., but as a Hindrance, it denotes unsteadiness on one particular thing that is being done. The Commentaries explain *vicikicchā* as the inability to decide that anything is definitely so. In other words, it is indecision.

This state is inhibited by the *jhāna* factor *vicāra*, or Sustained Application. It is eradicated on attaining *Sotāpanna*.

The following six conditions tend to its eradication:

1. Knowledge of the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*;
2. Discussion and questioning;
3. Understanding the nature of the *Vinaya* discipline;
4. Unshakable confidence;
5. Good friendship;
6. Profitable talk. ■

[793] *Vi-* "devoid" + *cikicchā* "wisdom."
[794] *Vici-* "seeking" + *kicchā* "vexation."

46

Insight

277. "All compound things are impermanent; those who realize this through insight-wisdom[795] *are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity.*[796]

278. "All compound things have suffering as their nature; those who realize this through insight-wisdom are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity.

279. "All states are without self;[797] *those who realize this through insight-wisdom are freed from suffering. This is the path that leads to purity."*[798]

Cultivation of Insight (Vipassanā)

When the *jhānas* are developed by temporarily inhibiting the Hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), the mind is so purified that it resembles a polished mirror, where everything is clearly reflected in true perspective. Still, there is not complete freedom from unwholesome thoughts, for, during the period when one has entered into and abided in the *jhānas*, the evil tendencies are only temporarily inhibited. They may rise to the surface at quite unexpected moments.

Discipline (*sīla*) regulates words and deeds; Concentration (*samādhi*) controls the mind; but it is Insight (*paññā*), the third and final stage of the threefold training, that enables the aspirant to eradicate wholly the defilements inhibited by *samādhi*.

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[795] *Paññā* is translated here as "insight-wisdom" (*vipassanā paññā*).

[796] That is, to the purification of the mind.

[797] Impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and soullessness (*anattā*) are the three characteristics of all things conditioned by causes (*saṁkhārā*). It is by contemplating these three characteristics that one realizes *nibbāna*. A meditator may concentrate on any characteristic that appeals to him or her most.

Anattā, that is, "soullessness, selflessness, or essencelessness," is the crux of Buddhism. The term *saṁkhāra* "compound," which is applied to any conditioned thing, is used in the two previous verses (nos. 277 and 278), while, in the third verse (no. 279), the term *dhamma* is used in order to show that everything, including the unconditioned *nibbāna*, is without self existence. *Nibbāna* is not included in *saṁkhāra*. It is neither transitory nor sorrowful. *Dhamma* embraces both the conditioned and the unconditioned. *Nibbāna* is, and it is essenceless.

[798] *Dhammapada*, XX, The Way, verses 277—279.

At the outset, one cultivates "Purity of View" (*diṭṭhi visuddhi*) in order to see things as they truly are. With one-pointed mind, one analyzes and examines this so-called "being." This searching examination shows that what one has called "I," or "self," is merely a complex compound of mind and matter that are in a state of constant flux.

Having thus gained a correct view of the real nature of this so-called "being," freed from the notion of a permanent soul, self, or ego, one searches for the causes of this "I" personality. One realizes that there is nothing in the world that is not conditioned by some cause or causes, past or present, and that one's present existence is due to past ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*), grasping (*upādāna*), *kamma*, and physical nutriment (*āhāra*) of the present life. On account of these five causes, this so-called "being" has arisen, and, inasmuch as past causes have conditioned the present, so will the present condition the future. Meditating thus, one transcends all doubts with regard to the past, present, and future.

Thereupon, one contemplates the truth that all conditioned things are transient (*anicca*), subject to suffering (*dukkha*), and devoid of a permanent soul, or self (*anattā*). Wherever one turns one's eyes, one sees nothing but these three characteristics standing out in bold relief. One realizes that life is a mere flux, conditioned by internal and external causes. Nowhere does one find any genuine happiness, for everything is fleeting, ever-changing, subject to decay, impermanent.

As one thus contemplates the real nature of life and is absorbed in meditation, a day comes when, to one's surprise, one witnesses an aura (*obhāsa*[799]) emitted by one's body. One experiences an unprecedented pleasure, happiness, and quietude. One becomes even-minded, religious fervor increases, mindfulness becomes clear, and insight keen. Mistaking this advanced state of moral progress for Sainthood, chiefly owing to the presence of the aura, one develops a liking for this mental state. Soon, however, the realization comes that these developments[800] are impediments to moral progress, and one cultivates the purity of knowledge with regard to what is the Path and what is not the Path (*maggāmagga-ñāṇadassana visuddhi*).

Perceiving the right path, one resumes one's meditation on the arising (*udaya ñāṇa*) and passing away (*vaya ñāṇa*) of all conditioned phenomena. Of these two states, the latter becomes more impressed on one's mind, since change is more conspicuous than becoming. Therefore, one directs one's attention to contemplation of the dissolution of things (*bhanga ñāṇa*). One perceives that both mind and matter, which constitute this so-called "being," are in a constant state of flux, not remaining the same for two consecutive moments. The knowledge then comes to one that all dissolving things are fearful (*bhaya ñāṇa*). The whole world appears to one as a pit of burning embers — a source of danger. Subsequently, one reflects on the wretchedness and vanity (*ādīnava ñāṇa*) of the fearful and deluded world and gets a feeling of disgust (*nibbidā ñāṇa*), followed by a strong will for deliverance from it (*muñcitukamyatā ñāṇa*).

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[799] *Obhāsa*, literally, "effulgence of light" — it appears at times during deep insight (*vipassanā*).

[800] That is, liking, grasping at, or attachment to this mental state.

With this strong desire for deliverance in view, one resumes one's meditations on the three characteristics of transiency, sorrow, and soullessness (*paṭisaṁkhā ñāṇa*) and, thereafter, develops complete equanimity (*upekkhā ñāṇa*) towards all conditioned things, having neither attachment nor aversion for any worldly object.[801]

Reaching this point of spiritual cultivation, one chooses one of the three characteristics for one's object of special endeavor and intently cultivates insight in that particular direction until the glorious day comes when one realizes one's ultimate goal — *nibbāna*.

> *As the traveler by night sees the landscape around him by a flash of lightning, and the image so obtained swims long thereafter before his dazzled eyes, so, the individual seeker, by the flashing light of insight, glimpses nibbāna with such clearness that the after-image never more fades from his mind.*[802]

When a spiritual pilgrim realizes *nibbāna* for the first time, one is called a *Sotāpanna*, one who has entered the stream that leads to *nibbāna*. The stream represents the Noble Eightfold Path. A *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Winner) is no longer a worldling (*puthujjana*), but an *Ariya* (Noble One).

Fetters (*Saṁyojana*)

On attaining the first stage of Sainthood, one eradicates the following three Fetters (*saṁyojana*) that bind one to existence:

1. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*,[803] "personality belief." Here, *kāya* refers to the five Aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*): (1) matter; (2) feeling; (3) perception; (4) mental formations; and (5) consciousness. The view that there exists an unchanging entity, a permanent self or soul, when there is, in fact, nothing other than a complex compound of psycho-physical aggregates, is termed *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*. The *Dhammasangaṇī* enumerates twenty kinds of such soul-theories.

2. *Vicikicchā*, "doubts." These are doubts about the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, the *Sangha*, the disciplinary rules (*sikkhā*), the past, the future, both the past and the future, and Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).

3. *Sīlabbataparāmāsa*: adherence to (wrongful) rites and rituals. The *Dhammasangaṇī* explains it thus:

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[801] These nine kinds of insight, namely, *udaya*, *vaya*, *bhanga*, *bhaya*, *ādīnava*, *nibbidā*, *muñcitukamyatā*, *paṭisaṁkhā*, and *upekkhā* are collectively termed *paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi*, Purity of View as regards knowledge of progress.

[802] Dr. Dahlke.

[803] *Sati* + *kāye* + *diṭṭhi*, literally, "view that a group or compound exists."

It is the theory held by ascetics and Brahmins outside this doctrine that purification is obtained by rules of moral conduct, or by rites, or by both rules of moral conduct and rites.

For the eradication of the remaining seven Fetters, a *Sotāpanna* is reborn seven times at most. He gains implicit confidence in the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*. He would not for any reason violate any of the five precepts. Inasmuch as he is destined for Enlightenment, he is not subject to rebirth in states of woe.

With fresh courage as a result of this distant glimpse of *nibbāna*, the noble pilgrim makes rapid progress, and, perfecting his insight, becomes a *Sakadāgāmī* (Once-Returner), the second stage of Sainthood, by weakening two other Fetters, namely, sense-desires (*kāmarāga*) and ill will (*paṭigha*).

Now, he is called a Once-Returner, because he is reborn in the human realm only once, should he not attain Arahantship in that current birth itself. It is interesting to note that the *Ariya* Saint who has attained the second stage of Sainthood can only weaken these two powerful Fetters, with which he is bound from a beginningless past. At times, though to a slight extent, he may harbor thoughts of lust and anger.

It is by attaining the third stage of Sainthood, that of the *Anāgāmī* (Non-Returner), that he completely eradicates those two Fetters. Thereafter, he neither returns to this world nor is he born in the celestial realms, since he has rooted out the desire for gratification of the senses. After death, he is reborn in the Pure Abodes (*suddhāvāssa*), an environment reserved for *Anāgāmīs*. There, he attains Arahantship and lives until the end of his life.

When a lay practitioner becomes an *Anāgāmī*, he leads a celibate life.

The *Anāgāmī* Saint now makes his final advance and, destroying the five remaining Fetters — attachment to the Realms of Form (*rūparāga*), attachment to the Formless Realms (*arūparāga*), pride (*māna*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*) —, attains Arahantship, the final stage of Sainthood.

Stream-Winners, Once-Returners, and Non-Returners are called *sekhas* (learners), because they still have to undergo additional training. *Arahants* are called *asekhas* (adepts), because they do not have to undergo further training.

The Arahant

An *Arahant*, literally, a "Worthy One," is not subject to rebirth, because he does not accumulate fresh *kamma* activities. The reproductive seeds leading to rebirth have all been destroyed.

The *Arahant* realizes that what was to be accomplished has been done — a heavy burden of sorrow has finally been relinquished, and all forms of craving and all shades of ignorance have been totally annihilated. The happy pilgrim now stands on heights more than celestial, far removed from uncontrolled passions and the defilements of the world, experiencing the unutterable bliss of *nibbāna*.

Rebirth can no longer affect him, since no more reproductive seeds are formed by fresh karmic activities.

Though an *Arahant*, he is not wholly free from physical suffering, since his experience of the bliss of Deliverance is only intermittent and since he has yet to cast off his material body.

An *Arahant* is called an *asekha*, one who does not undergo further training, since he has lived the Holy Life and accomplished his objective. The other Saints (*Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmī*, and *Anāgāmī*) are called *sekhas*, because they must still undergo additional training.

It may be mentioned, in this connection, that *Anāgāmīs* and *Arahants* who have developed the *rūpa* and *arūpa jhānas* can experience nibbānic bliss uninterruptedly for as long as seven days, even in this life. In Pāḷi, this is known as *nirodha-samāpatti*.[804] An *Ariya*, in this state, is wholly free from pain, and his mental activities are all suspended. His stream of consciousness temporarily ceases to flow.

With regard to the difference between one who has attained *nirodha-samāpatti* and a dead man, the *Visuddhimagga* states:

> *In the corpse, not only are the supple forces of the body (that is, respiration), speech, and mind stilled and quiescent, but also vitality is exhausted, heat is quenched, and the faculties of sense broken up, whereas, in the Bhikkhu in absorption,*[805] *vitality exists, heart abides, and the faculties are clear, although respiration, observation, and perception are stilled and quiescent.*

According to Buddhism, in conventional terms, this is the highest form of bliss possible in this life.

The question may occur: "Why does an *Arahant* continue to live when he has already attained *nibbāna*?" It is because the karmic force that produced his birth is still not spent. To quote Schopenhauer, it is like the potter's wheel from which the hand of the potter has been lifted, or, to cite a better illustration from the Buddhist scriptures, an *Arahant* is like a branch that has been severed from the tree. It does not produce any more fresh leaves, flowers, and fruits, since it is no longer supported by the sap of the tree. However, the leaves, flowers, and fruits that already existed last until the death of that particular branch.

The *Arahant* lives out his life-span, accumulating no more fresh *kamma* to his store and utterly indifferent to death. Like Venerable Sāriputta, he would say:

> *"I am not afraid to die nor yet to live. I shall lay down this mortal frame in due course. With mind alert, with consciousness controlled, with thought of death, I do not dally nor yet delight in living. I await the hour like any hireling who has done his task."*

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[804] Literally, "attainment to cessation."

[805] That is, a *Bhikkhu* who has attained *nirodha-samāpatti*.

As a flame blown to and fro by the wind goes out and cannot be registered, so, says the *Buddha*, an *Arahant*, set free from mind and matter, has disappeared after his passing away and cannot be registered.

Has such an *Arahant* then merely disappeared, or does he indeed no longer exist? For him who has disappeared, states the *Sutta Nipāta*, there exists no form by which it could be said, "he is." When all conditions are cut off, all matter for discussion is also cut off. The *Udāna* explains this intricate point thus:

> *"As the fiery sparks from a forge are one by one extinguished, and no one knows where they have gone — so it is with those who have attained to complete emancipation, who have crossed the flood of desire, who have entered the calm delight; of those, no trace remains."*

The *Majjhima Nikāya*[806] also relates an interesting discussion between the *Buddha* and Vacchagotta concerning this very question. Vacchagotta, a wandering ascetic, approached the *Buddha* and asked him:

> *"But, Gotama, where is the Bhikkhu who is delivered of the mind reborn?"*[807]
>
> *"Vaccha, to say that he is reborn would not fit the case."*
>
> *"Then, Gotama, he is not reborn."*
>
> *"Vaccha, to say that he is not reborn would not fit the case."*
>
> *"Then, Gotama, he is both reborn and not reborn."*
>
> *"Vaccha, to say that he is both reborn and not reborn would not fit the case."*
>
> *"Then, Gotama, he is neither reborn nor not reborn."*
>
> *"Vaccha, to say that he is neither reborn nor not reborn would not fit the case."*

Vaccha was baffled on hearing these seemingly contradictory answers, and, in his confusion, exclaimed:

> *"Gotama, I am at a loss at how to think about this matter, and I have become greatly confused."*
>
> *"Enough, O Vaccha. Do not be at a loss at how to think about this matter, and do not become greatly confused. Profound, O Vaccha, is this doctrine, complicated and difficult to understand, good, excellent, and not to be reached by mere reasoning, subtle and intelligible only to the wise — it is a hard doctrine for you to learn, who belongs to another sect, to another faith, to another persuasion, to another discipline, and who sits at the feet of another teacher. Therefore, O*

[806] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Paribbājakavagga, Aggivacchagotta Sutta, no. 72.
[807] The reference here is to an *Arahant*.

Vaccha, I shall now question you, and you may answer as you please. What do you think, Vaccha? Suppose a fire were to burn in front of you, would you be aware that this fire is burning in front of you?"

"Gotama, if a fire were to burn in front of me, I would be aware that a fire was burning in front of me."

"But suppose, Vaccha, someone were to ask you: 'On what does this fire that is burning in front of you depend?' What would you answer, Vaccha?

"I would answer, O Gotama, 'it is on fuel of grass and wood that this fire in front of me depends'."

"But, Vaccha, if the fire in front of you were to go out, would you be aware that the fire in front of you had gone out?"

"Gotama, if the fire in front of me had gone out, I would be aware that the fire in front of me had gone out."

"But, Vaccha, if someone were to ask you: 'In what direction has the fire gone, east or west, north or south?' What would you say, Vaccha?"

"The question would not fit the case, Gotama, for the fire depended on fuel of grass and wood, and, when that fuel has been used up, and the fire can get no other, being thus without nutriment, it is said to have gone out."

"In exactly the same way, Vaccha, all forms, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness have been abandoned, uprooted, made like a palmyra stump, become extinct, and not liable to spring up in the future.

"The Arahant, O Vaccha, who has been released from what are called the Five Aggregates, is deep, immeasurable, like the mighty ocean. To say that he is reborn would not fit the case. To say that he is not reborn would not fit the case. To say that he is neither reborn nor not reborn would not fit the case."

One cannot say that the *Arahant* is reborn, since all passions that condition rebirth are eradicated, nor can one say that the *Arahant* is annihilated, for there is nothing to annihilate.

Nibbāna, it may safely be concluded, is obtained by the complete cessation of the defilements (*kilesa*), but the real nature of this Supreme State cannot be expressed in words.

From a metaphysical point of view, *nibbāna* is complete deliverance (*vimokkha*) from suffering (*dukkha*). From a psychological point of view, *nibbāna* is the eradication of egoism (*ahaṁkāra*). From an ethical point of view, *nibbāna* is the destruction of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). ■

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The Jhānas (Absorptions)[808]

"Meditating[809] *earnestly and striving for nibbāna, the wise attain the highest joy and freedom."*[810] [811]

INTRODUCTION

The Doctrinal Context of *Jhāna*

The *Buddha* says that, just as, in the great ocean, there is but one taste, the taste of salt, so, in His doctrine and discipline, there is but one taste, the taste of freedom. The taste of freedom that pervades the *Buddha's* teaching is the taste of spiritual freedom, which, from the Buddhist perspective, means freedom from suffering (*dukkha*). In the process leading to deliverance from suffering, meditation (*bhāvanā*) is the means of generating the inner awakening required for liberation (*vimokkha*). The methods of meditation taught in the Theravādin Buddhist tradition are based on the *Buddha's* own experience, forged by Him in the course of His own quest for enlightenment. They are designed to re-create, in the disciple who practices them, the same essential experience that the *Buddha* Himself attained when He sat beneath the *Bodhi*-tree, the awakening to the Four Noble Truths.

The various subjects and methods of meditation expounded in the Theravādin Buddhist scriptures — the Pāḷi Canon and its Commentaries — divide into two inter-related systems. One is called the "development of serenity" (*samatha-bhāvanā*), the other the "development of insight" (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*). The former also goes under the name of "development of concentration" (*samādhi-bhāvanā*), the latter the "development of wisdom" (*paññā-bhāvanā*). The practice of serenity meditation aims at developing a calm, concentrated, unified mind as a means of experiencing inner peace and as a basis for wisdom. The practice of insight meditation aims at gaining a direct understanding of

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[808] Adapted from *The Jhānas in Theravāda Buddhist Meditation* by Mahāthera Henepola Gunaratana (= The Wheel Publication, nos. 351/353) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1988]).
[809] In this verse, meditation means both calm abiding (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*).
[810] *Nibbāna*.
[811] *Dhammapada*, II, Vigilance, verse 23.

the real nature of phenomena. Of the two, the development of insight is regarded by Buddhism as the essential key to liberation, the direct antidote to the ignorance (*avijjā*) underlying bondage and suffering. Whereas serenity meditation is recognized as common to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist contemplative disciplines, insight meditation is held to be the unique discovery of the *Buddha* and an unparalleled feature of His path. However, because the growth of insight presupposes a certain degree of concentration, and serenity meditation helps to achieve this, the development of serenity also claims an incontestable place in the Buddhist meditative process. The two types of meditation work together to make the mind a fit instrument for enlightenment. With his mind unified by means of the development of serenity, made sharp and bright by the development of insight, the meditator can proceed unobstructed to reach the end of suffering, *nibbāna*.

Pivotal to both systems of meditation, though belonging inherently to the side of serenity, is a set of meditative attainments called the "*jhānas*." Though translators have offered various renderings of this word, ranging from the feeble "musing" to the misleading "trance" and the more common "absorption," we prefer to leave the word untranslated and to let its meaning emerge from its contextual usages. From these, it is clear that the *jhānas* are states of deep mental unification that result from the centering of the mind upon a single object with such power of attention that a total immersion in the object takes place. The early *suttas* speak of four *jhānas*, named simply after their numerical position in the series: (1) the first *jhāna*; (2) the second *jhāna*; (3) the third *jhāna*; and (4) the fourth *jhāna*. In the *suttas*, the four repeatedly appear each described by a standard formula, which will be examined later in detail.

The importance of the *jhānas* in the Buddhist path can readily be gauged from the frequency with which they are mentioned throughout the *suttas*. The *jhānas* figure prominently both in the *Buddha's* own experience and in His exhortation to disciples. In His childhood, while attending an annual plowing festival, the future *Buddha* spontaneously entered the first *jhāna*. It was the memory of this childhood incident, many years later after His futile pursuit of austerities, that revealed to Him the way to enlightenment during His period of deepest despondency.[812] After taking His seat beneath the *Bodhi*-tree, the *Buddha* entered the four *jhānas* immediately before directing His mind to the threefold knowledge that issued in His enlightenment.[813] Throughout His active career, the four *jhānas* remained "His heavenly dwelling,"[814] to which He resorted in order to live happily here and now. His understanding of the corruption, purification, and emergence in the *jhānas* and other meditative attainments is one of the Tathāgata's ten powers which enable Him to turn the matchless wheel of the *Dhamma*.[815] Just before His passing away, the *Buddha* entered the *jhānas* in direct and reverse order, and the passing away itself took place directly from the fourth *jhāna*.[816]

[812] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 246—247.
[813] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 247—249.
[814] *Dīgha Nikāya* III, 20.
[815] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 70.
[816] *Dīgha Nikāya* II, 156.

The *Buddha* is constantly seen in the *suttas* encouraging His disciples to develop the *jhānas*. The four *jhānas* are invariably included in the complete course of training laid down for disciples.[817] They figure in the training as the discipline of higher consciousness (*adhicittasikkhā*), right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) of the Noble Eightfold Path, and the faculty and power of concentration (*samādhindriya*, *samādhibala*). Though a vehicle of dry-insight can be found, indications are that this path is not an easy one, lacking the aid of the powerful serenity available to the practitioner of *jhāna*. The way of the *jhāna* attainer seems, by comparison, smoother and more pleasurable.[818] The *Buddha* even refers to the four *jhānas* figuratively as a kind of *nibbāna*: He calls them "immediately visible *nibbāna*," "factorial *nibbāna*," "*nibbāna* here and now."[819]

To attain the *jhānas*, the meditator must begin by eliminating the unwholesome mental states obstructing inner collectedness, generally grouped together as the *five hindrances* (*pañcanīvaraṇa*): (1) desire for gratification of the senses (*kāmacchanda*); (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*); (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*); (4) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*); (5) and doubt, or indecisiveness (*vicikicchā*). The mind's absorption on its object is brought about by five opposing mental states — (1) applied thought, or initial application (*vitakka*); (2) sustained thought, or sustained application (*vicāra*); (3) rapture, or ecstasy, or zest (*pīti*); (4) happiness (*sukha*); and (5) one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) — called the *jhāna factors* (*jhānanga*), because they lift the mind to the level of the first *jhāna* and remain there as its defining components.

After reaching the first *jhāna*, the ardent meditator can go on to reach the higher *jhānas*, which is done by eliminating the coarser factors in each *jhāna*. Beyond the four *jhānas* lies another fourfold set of higher meditative states which deepen still further the element of serenity. These attainments (*āruppā*), are: (1) the Sphere of Boundless Space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*); (2) the Sphere of Boundless Consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*); (3) the Sphere of Nothingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*); and (4) the Sphere of Neither Perception nor Non-perception (*n'eva saññā-n'asaññāyatana*). In the Pāḷi Commentaries, these come to be called the "*four immaterial jhānas*" (*arūpajjhāna*), the four preceding states being renamed for the sake of clarity, the "*four fine-material jhānas*" (*rūpajjhāna*). Often, the two sets are joined together under the collective title of the eight *jhānas*, or the eight attainments (*aṭṭhasamāpattiyo*).

The four *jhānas* and the four immaterial attainments appear initially as mundane states of deep serenity pertaining to the preliminary stage of the Buddhist path, and, on this level, they help provide the base of concentration needed for wisdom to arise. But the four *jhānas* again reappear in a later stage in the development of the path, in direct association with liberating wisdom, and they are then designated the *supramundane* (*lokuttara*) *jhānas*. These supramundane *jhānas* are the levels of concentration pertaining

[817] See, for example, the Sāmaññaphala Sutta (*Dīgha Nikāya*, no. 2), the Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta (*Majjhima Nikāya*, no. 27), etc.
[818] *Anguttara Nikāya* II, 150—152.
[819] *Anguttara Nikāya* IV, 453—454.

to the four degrees of enlightenment experience called the "supramundane paths" (*magga*) and the stages of liberation resulting from them, the "four fruits" (*phala*).

Finally, even after full liberation is achieved, the mundane *jhānas* can still remain as attainments available to the fully liberated person (*Arahat*), part of his untrammeled contemplative experience.

The Etymology of *Jhāna*

The great Buddhist commentator Buddhaghosa traces the Pāḷi word "*jhāna*" (Sanskrit *dhyāna*) to two verbal forms. One, the etymologically correct derivation, is the verb *jhāyati*, meaning "to think, or to meditate"; the other is a more playful derivation, intended to illuminate its function rather than its verbal source, from the verb *jhāpeti* meaning "to burn up." He explains: "It burns up opposing states, thus, it is *jhāna*,"[820] the purport being that *jhāna* "burns up" or "destroys" the mental defilements (*kilesa*) preventing the development of serenity and insight.

In the same passage, Buddhaghosa says that *jhāna* has the characteristic mark of contemplation (*upanijjhāna*). Contemplation, he states, is twofold: (1) the contemplation of the object and (2) the contemplation of the characteristics of phenomena. The former is exercised by the eight attainments of serenity together with their access, since these contemplate the object used as the basis for developing concentration; for this reason, these attainments are given the name "*jhāna*" in the mainstream of Pāḷi meditative exposition. However, Buddhaghosa also allows that the term "*jhāna*" can be extended loosely to insight (*vipassanā*), the paths, and the fruits on the ground that these perform the work of contemplating the characteristics of things — the three marks of (1) impermanence (*anicca*), (2) suffering (*dukkha*), and (3) non-self (*anattā*), in the case of insight; *nibbāna*, in the case of the paths and fruits.

In brief, the twofold meaning of *jhāna* as "contemplation" and "burning up" can be brought into connection with the meditative process as follows. By fixing his mind on the object, the meditator reduces and eliminates the lower mental qualities such as the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and promotes the growth of the higher qualities such as the *jhāna* factors (*jhānanga*), which lead the mind to complete absorption in the object. Then, by contemplating the characteristics of phenomena with insight, the meditator eventually reaches the supramundane *jhāna* of the four paths, and with this *jhāna*, he burns up the defilements and attains the liberating experience of the fruits.

Jhāna and *Samādhi*

In the vocabulary of Buddhist meditation, the word "*jhāna*" is closely connected with another word, "*samādhi*," generally rendered by "concentration." *Samādhi* derives

[820] *Vinaya Aṭṭhakathā* I, 116.

from the prefixed verbal root *sam-ā-dhā-,* meaning "to collect or to bring together," thus suggesting the concentration or unification of the mind. The word "*samādhi*" is almost interchangeable with the word "*samatha*," "serenity," or "calm-abiding," though the latter comes from a different root, *sam-*, meaning "to become calm."

In the *suttas*, *samādhi* is defined as "one-pointedness of mind"[821] (*cittass' ekaggatā*), and this definition is followed rigorously throughout the *Abhidhamma*. The *Abhidhamma* treats one-pointedness as a distinct mental factor present in every state of consciousness, exercising the function of unifying the mind on its object. From this strict psychological viewpoint, *samādhi* can be present in unwholesome states of consciousness as well as in wholesome and neutral states. In its unwholesome forms, it is called "wrong concentration" (*micchāsamādhi*); in its wholesome forms, "right concentration" (*sammā-samādhi*).

In expositions on the practice of meditation, however, *samādhi* is limited to one-pointedness of mind,[822] and even here, we can understand from the context that the word means only the wholesome one-pointedness involved in the deliberate transmutation of the mind to a heightened level of concentration. Thus, Buddhaghosa explains *samādhi* etymologically as "the centering of consciousness and consciousness concomitants evenly and rightly on a single object... the state by means of which consciousness and its concomitants remain evenly and rightly [concentrated] on a single object, undistracted and unscattered."[823]

However, despite the commentator's bid for consistency, the word *samādhi* is used in the Pāḷi literature on meditation with varying degrees of specificity of meaning. In the narrowest sense, as defined by Buddhaghosa, it denotes the particular mental factor responsible for the concentrating of the mind, namely, one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). In a wider sense, it can signify the states of unified consciousness that result from the strengthening of concentration, that is, the meditative attainments of serenity and the stages leading up to them. And in a still wider sense, the word *samādhi* can be applied to the method of practice used to produce and cultivate these refined states of concentration, here being equivalent to the development of serenity.

It is in the second sense that *samādhi* and *jhāna* come closest in meaning. The *Buddha* explains right concentration as the four *jhānas*,[824] and, in doing so, allows concentration to encompass the meditative attainments signified by the *jhānas*. However, even though *jhāna* and *samādhi* can overlap in denotation, certain differences in their suggested and contextual meanings prevent unqualified identification of the two terms. First, behind the *Buddha's* use of the *jhāna* formula to explain right concentration lies a more technical understanding of the terms. According to this understanding, *samādhi* can be narrowed down in range to signify only one mental factor, the most prominent in the *jhāna*, namely, "one-pointedness," while the word "*jhāna*" itself must be seen as

[821] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 301.
[822] *Visuddhimagga* 84—85.
[823] *Visuddhimagga* 84—85.
[824] *Dīgha Nikāya* II, 313.

encompassing the state of consciousness in its entirety, or at least the whole group of mental factors individuating that meditative state as a *jhāna*.

In the second place, when *samādhi* is considered in its broader meaning, it involves a wider range of reference than *jhāna*. The Pāḷi exegetical tradition recognizes three levels of *samādhi*: (1) preliminary concentration (*parikamma-samādhi*), which is produced as a result of the meditator's initial efforts to focus his mind on his meditation subject; (2) neighborhood, or access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), marked by the suppression of the five hindrances, the manifestation of the *jhāna* factors, and the appearance of a luminous mental replica of the meditation object called the "counterpart sign" (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*); and (3) attainment, or absorption concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), the complete immersion of the mind in its object brought about by the full maturation of the *jhāna* factors.[825] Absorption concentration comprises the eight attainments — the four fine-material *jhānas* and the four immaterial attainments —, and to this extent, *jhāna* and *samādhi* coincide. However, *samādhi* still has a broader scope than *jhāna*, since it includes not only the *jhānas* themselves but also the two preparatory degrees of concentration leading up to them. Further, *samādhi* also covers a still different type of concentration called "momentary concentration" (*khaṇika-samādhi*), the mobile mental stabilization produced in the course of insight contemplation by observing, without attachment of any kind, the passing flow of phenomena.

THE PREPARATION FOR JHĀNA

Right Conditions

The *jhānas* do not arise out of a void but in dependence upon the right conditions. They arise only when provided with the nutriments conducive to their development. Therefore, prior to beginning meditation, the aspirant to the *jhānas* must prepare a foundation for his practice by fulfilling certain preliminary requirements. He must first endeavor to purify his moral virtue, sever the outer impediments to practice, and place himself under a qualified teacher who will assign him a suitable meditation subject and explain to him the methods of developing it. After learning these, the disciple must then seek out a congenial dwelling and diligently strive for success. In what follows, we will examine, in order, each of the preparatory steps that have to be fulfilled before beginning to develop *jhāna*.

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[825] See Nārada, *A Manual of Abhidhamma* (4th edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 389 and 395—396; Bhikkhu Bodhi (General Editor), *Abhidhammattha Sangaha: A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Pāḷi Text, Translation, & Explanatory Guide* (Seattle: PBS Pariyatti Editions [2000]), I 18—20; II 25; VII 16, 22, 23; VIII 14; Paravahera Vajirañāṇa Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice* (Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society), Chapter 4; Bhadantācariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, translated from the Pāḷi by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (Seattle: PBS Pariyatti Editions [1999]), III 5, 21, 25; IV 32, 86, 132; VI 67; VII 28; XII 7; XIV 86; XVIII 3; XXI 113f.

The Moral Foundation for *Jhāna*

A practitioner aspiring to the *jhānas* must first lay a solid foundation of moral discipline. Moral purity is indispensable to meditative progress for several important psychological reasons. First, it is needed in order to safeguard against the danger of remorse, the nagging sense of guilt that arises when the basic principles of morality are ignored or deliberately violated. Scrupulous conformity to virtuous rules of conduct protects the meditator from this danger, which is disruptive to inner calm but which brings joy and happiness when the meditator reflects upon the purity of his conduct.[826]

A second reason a moral foundation is needed for meditation follows from an understanding of the purpose of concentration. Concentration, in the Buddhist discipline, aims at providing a base for wisdom (*paññā*) by cleansing the mind of the dispersive influence of the defilements (*kilesa*). But in order for the concentration exercises to effectively combat the defilements, the coarser expressions of the latter through bodily and verbal action first have to be checked. Moral transgressions being invariably motivated by defilements — by greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) —, when a person acts in violation of the precepts of morality, he excites and reinforces the very same mental factors his practice of meditation is intended to eliminate. This involves him in a crossfire of incompatible aims, which renders his attempts at mental purification ineffective. The only way he can avoid frustration in his endeavor to purify the mind of its subtler defilements is to prevent the unwholesome inner impulses from manifesting in the coarser form of unwholesome bodily and verbal deeds. Only when he establishes control over the outer expression of the defilements can he turn to deal with them inwardly as mental obsessions that appear in the process of meditation.

The practice of moral discipline consists of two aspects: (1) abstinence from unwholesome actions of body and speech and (2) the observance of ethical principles promoting peace within oneself and harmony in one's relations with others. The basic code of moral discipline taught by the *Buddha* for the guidance of his lay followers is the five precepts: (1) abstinence from taking life; (2) abstinence from taking what is not freely given; (3) abstinence from sexual misconduct; (4) abstinence from false speech; and (5) abstinence from intoxicating drinks and drugs causing heedlessness. These principles are binding as minimal ethical obligations for all practitioners of the Buddhist path, and, within their bounds, considerable progress in meditation can be made. However, those aspiring to reach the higher levels of *jhānas* and to pursue the further path to the stages of liberation, are encouraged to take up the more complete moral discipline pertaining to the life of renunciation. Early Buddhism is unambiguous in its emphasis on the limitations of household life for following the path in its fullness and perfection. Time and again, the texts say that the household life is confining, a "path for the dust of passion," while the life of homelessness is like open space. Thus, a disciple who is fully intent upon making rapid progress towards *nibbāna* will, when outer

[826] *Anguttara Nikāya* V, 1—7.

conditions allow for it, "shave off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and go forth from the home life into homelessness."[827]

The moral training for *Bhikkhus* (Buddhist Monks) has been arranged into a system called the "fourfold purification of morality" (*cātupārisuddhisīla*).[828] The first component of this scheme, its backbone, consists in the *morality of restraint according to the Pātimokkha,* the code of 227 training precepts promulgated by the *Buddha* to regulate the conduct of the *Sangha*, or Monastic Order. Each of these rules is in some way intended to facilitate control over the defilements and to induce a mode of living marked by harmlessness, contentment, and simplicity. The second aspect of the Monk's moral discipline is *restraint of the senses,* by which the Monk maintains close watchfulness over his mind as he engages in sensory contacts so that he does not give rise to desire for pleasurable objects and aversion towards repulsive ones. Third, the Monk is to live by a *purified livelihood,* obtaining his basic requisites such as robes, food, lodgings, and medicines in ways consistent with his vocation. The fourth factor of the moral training is *proper use of the requisites,* which means that the Monk should reflect upon the purposes for which he makes use of his requisites and should employ them only for maintaining his health and comfort, not for luxury and enjoyment.

After establishing a foundation of purified morality, the aspirant to meditation is advised to cut off any outer impediments (*palibodha*) that may hinder his efforts to lead a contemplative life. These impediments are numbered as ten: (1) a dwelling, which becomes an impediment for those who allow their minds to become preoccupied with its upkeep or with its appurtenances; (2) a family of relatives or supporters with whom the aspirant may become emotionally involved in ways that hinder his progress; (3) gains, which may bind the Monk by obligation to those who offer them; (4) a class of students who must be instructed; (5) building work, which demands time and attention; (6) travel; (7) relatives, meaning parents, teachers, pupils, or close friends; (8) illness; (9) the study of scriptures; and (10) supernormal powers, which are an impediment to insight.[829]

The Good Friend and the Subject of Meditation

The path of practice leading to the *jhānas* is an arduous course involving precise techniques, and skillfulness is needed in dealing with the pitfalls that lie along the way. The knowledge of how to attain the *jhānas* has been transmitted through a lineage of teachers going back to the time of the *Buddha* Himself. A prospective meditator is advised to avail himself of the living heritage of accumulated knowledge and experience by placing himself under the care of a qualified teacher, described as a "good friend" (*kalyāṇa-mitta*), one who gives guidance and wise advice rooted in his own practice and experience. On the basis of either the ability to penetrate the minds of others, or by

[827] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 179.
[828] A full description of the fourfold purification can be found in the *Visuddhimagga*, Chapter 1.
[829] *Visuddhimagga* 90—97.

personal observation, or by questioning, the teacher will assess the temperament of the new student and then select a meditation subject for him appropriate to his temperament.

The various meditation subjects that the *Buddha* prescribed for the development of serenity (*samatha*) have been collected in the Commentaries into a set called the forty "*kammaṭṭhāna*." This word means, literally, "a place of work," and is applied to the subject of meditation as the place where the meditator undertakes the work of meditation. The forty meditation subjects are distributed into seven categories, enumerated in the *Visuddhimagga* as follows: (1) ten *kasiṇas*; (2) ten kinds of foulness, or impurity; (3) ten recollections; (4) four divine abidings; (5) four immaterial states; (6) one perception; and (7) one analysis.[830]

A *kasiṇa* is a "device" representing a particular quality used as a support for concentration. The ten *kasiṇas* are those of earth, water, fire, and air; four color *kasiṇas* — blue, yellow, red, and white; the light *kasiṇa*; and the limited space *kasiṇa*. A *kasiṇa* can be either a naturally occurring form of the element or color chosen or an artificially produced device such as a disk that the meditator can use at his convenience in his meditation quarters.

The ten kinds of foulness, or impurity, are ten stages in the decomposition of a corpse: (1) the bloated corpse; (2) the livid corpse; (3) the festering corpse; (4) the cut-up corpse; (5) the gnawed corpse; (6) the scattered corpse; (7) the hacked and scattered corpse; (8) the bleeding corpse; (9) the worm-infested corpse; and (10) a skeleton. The main purpose of these meditations is to reduce sensual lust by gaining a clear perception of the repulsiveness of the body.

The ten recollections are: (1) the *Buddha*; (2) the *Dhamma*; (3) the *Sangha*; (4) morality; (5) generosity; (6) celestial beings; (7) mindfulness of death; (8) mindfulness of the body; (9) mindfulness of breathing; and (10) the recollection of peace. The first three are devotional contemplations on the sublime qualities of the "Three Jewels," the primary objects of Buddhist virtues, and on the celestial beings inhabiting the heavenly worlds, intended principally for those still intent on a higher rebirth. Mindfulness of death is reflection on the inevitability of death, a constant spur to spiritual exertion. Mindfulness of the body involves the mental dissection of the body into thirty-two principal parts, undertaken with a view to perceiving its unattractiveness. Mindfulness of breathing is awareness of the in-and-out movement of the breath, perhaps the most fundamental of all Buddhist meditation subjects. Finally, the recollection of peace is reflection on the qualities of *nibbāna*.

The four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*) are the development of: (1) boundless loving-kindness (*mettā*); (2) compassion (*karuṇā*); (3) sympathetic joy (*muditā*); and (4) equanimity (*upekkhā*). These meditations are also called the "immeasurables" (*appamaññā*), because they are to be developed towards all sentient beings without qualification or exclusiveness.

The four immaterial states are: (1) the sphere of boundless space; (2) the sphere of boundless consciousness; (3) the sphere of nothingness; and (4) the sphere of neither

[830] The following discussion is based upon the *Visuddhimagga*, 110—115.

perception nor non-perception. These are the objects leading to the corresponding meditative attainments, the formless, or immaterial, *jhānas*.

The one perception is the perception of the repulsiveness of food. The one analysis is the analysis of the four elements, that is, the analysis of the physical body into the elemental modes of: (1) solidity (extension); (2) fluidity (cohesion); (3) heat (hot and cold); and (4) air (motion).

The forty meditation subjects are treated in the commentarial texts from two important angles — (1) their ability to induce different levels of concentration, and (2) their suitability for differing temperaments. Not all meditation subjects are equally effective in inducing the deeper levels of concentration. They are first distinguished on the basis of their capacity for inducing only access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) or for inducing full absorption (*appanā samādhi*); those capable of inducing absorption are then further distinguished according to their ability to induce the different levels of *jhāna*.

Of the forty subjects, ten are capable of leading only to access concentration: eight recollections — that is, all except mindfulness of the body and mindfulness of breathing — plus the perception of repulsiveness in nutriment and the analysis of the four elements. These, because they are occupied with a diversity of qualities and involve an active application of discursive thought, cannot lead beyond access concentration. The other thirty subjects can all lead to absorption.

The ten *kasiṇas* and mindfulness of breathing, owing to their simplicity and freedom from thought construction, can lead to all four form, or fine-material, *jhānas*. The ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness of the body lead only to the first *jhāna*, being limited because the mind can only hold onto them with the aid of applied thought (*vitakka*), which is absent in the second and higher *jhānas*. The first three divine abidings can induce the lower three *jhānas*, but not the fourth, since they arise in association with pleasant feeling, while the divine abiding of equanimity occurs only at the level of the fourth *jhāna*, where neutral feeling gains ascendency. The four immaterial states lead to the respective formless, or immaterial, *jhānas* corresponding to their names.

The forty subjects are also differentiated according to their appropriateness for different character types. Six main character types are recognized — (1) the greedy; (2) the hating; (3) the deluded; (4) the faithful; (5) the intelligent; and (6) the speculative — this oversimplified typology being taken only as a pragmatic guideline, which, in practice, admits various shades and combinations. The ten kinds of foulness and mindfulness of the body, clearly intended to weaken sense desire, are suitable for those of a greedy temperament. Eight subjects — the four divine abidings and the four color *kasiṇas* — are appropriate for an angry or hateful temperament. Mindfulness of breathing is suitable for those of the deluded and the speculative temperament. The first six recollections are appropriate for the faithful temperament. Four subjects — (1) mindfulness of death; (2) the recollection of peace; (3) the analysis of the four elements; and (4) the perception of the repulsiveness in nutriment — are especially effective for those of an intelligent temperament. The remaining six *kasiṇas* and the immaterial states are suitable for all kinds of temperaments. But the *kasiṇas* should be limited in size for one of speculative temperament and large in size for one of deluded temperament.

Immediately after giving this breakdown, Buddhaghosa adds a stipulation in order to prevent misunderstanding. He states that this division by way of temperament is made on the basis of direct opposition and complete suitability, but, actually, there is no wholesome form of meditation that does not suppress the defilements and strengthen the virtuous mental factors. Thus, an individual meditator may be advised to meditate on foulness in order to abandon lust, on loving-kindness to abandon hatred, on mindfulness of breathing to cut off discursive thought, and on impermanence to eliminate the conceit "I am."[831]

Choosing a Suitable Dwelling

The teacher assigns a meditation subject to his pupil appropriate to his character and explains the methods of developing it. He can teach it gradually to a pupil who is going to remain in close proximity to him, or in detail to one who will go to practice it elsewhere. If the disciple is not going to stay with his teacher, he must be careful to select a suitable place for meditation. The texts mention eighteen kinds of monasteries unfavorable to the development of *jhāna*: (1) a large monastery; (2) a new one; (3) a dilapidated one; (4) one near a road; (5) one with a pond, (6) leaves, (7) flowers, or (8) fruits; (9) one sought after by many people; (10) one in cities, (11) among timber or (12) fields, (13) where people quarrel, (14) in a port, (15) in border lands, (16) on a frontier; (17) a haunted place; and (18) one without access to a spiritual teacher.[832]

The factors which make a dwelling favorable to meditation are mentioned by the *Buddha* Himself: (1) It should not be too far from or too near to a village that can be relied on as an alms resort, and (2) it should have a clear path; (3) it should be quiet and secluded; (4) it should be free from rough weather and (5) from harmful insects and animals; (6) one should be able to obtain one's physical requisites while dwelling there; and (7) the dwelling should provide ready access to learned elders and spiritual friends who can be consulted when problems arise in meditation.[833] The types of dwelling places commended by the *Buddha* most frequently in the *suttas* as conducive to the *jhānas* are: (1) a secluded dwelling in the forest; (2) at the foot of a tree; (3) on a mountain; (4) in a cleft; (5) in a cave; (6) in a cemetery; (7) on a wooded flatland; (8) in the open air; or (9) on a heap of straw.[834] Having found a suitable dwelling and settled there, the disciple should maintain scrupulous observance of the rules of discipline. He should be content with his simple requisites, exercise control over his sense faculties, be mindful and discerning in all activities, and practice meditation diligently as he was instructed. It is at this point that he meets the first great challenge of his contemplative life, the battle with the five hindrances.

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[831] *Anguttara Nikāya* IV, 358.
[832] *Visuddhimagga* 118—121.
[833] *Anguttara Nikāya* V, 15.
[834] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 181.

THE FIRST JHĀNA AND ITS FACTORS

The Twofold Process of Development

The attainment of any *jhāna* comes about through a twofold process of development. On one side, the states obstructive to it, called its "factors of abandonment," have to be eliminated, on the other, the states composing it, called its "factors of possession," have to be acquired. In the case of the first *jhāna*, the factors of abandonment are the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), and the factors of possession the five basic *jhāna* factors (*jhānanga*). Both are alluded to in the standard formula for the first *jhāna*, the opening portion of which refers to the abandonment of the hindrances, while the subsequent portion enumerates the *jhāna* factors:

> *"Quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind, one enters and dwells in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought with rapture and happiness born of seclusion."*[835]

First, we will discuss the five hindrances and their abandonment. Next, we will investigate the *jhāna* factors both individually and by way of their combined contribution to the attainment of the first *jhāna*. Finally, we will close with some remarks on the ways of perfecting the first *jhāna* — a necessary preparation for the further development of concentration.

The Abandoning of the Hindrances

The five hindrances (*pañcanīvaraṇa*) are: (1) desire for gratification of the senses (sense desire) (*kāmacchanda*); (2) ill will, hatred, aversion (*vyāpāda*); (3) sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*); (4) restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*); (5) and doubt (*vicikicchā*). This group, the principal classification the *Buddha* uses for the obstacles to meditation, receives its name because its five members hinder and envelop the mind, preventing meditative development in the two spheres of serenity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). Hence, the *Buddha* calls them "obstructions, hindrances, corruptions of the mind which weaken wisdom."[836]

The hindrance of desire for gratification of the senses (*kāmacchanda*) is explained as desire for the "five strands of sense pleasure," that is, for pleasant forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles. It ranges from subtle liking to powerful lust. The hindrance of ill will (*vyāpāda*) signifies aversion directed towards disagreeable persons or things. It can vary in range from mild annoyance to overpowering hatred. Thus, the first two hindrances correspond to the first two root defilements, greed (*lobha*) and hate (*dosa*).

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[835] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 181; *Vibhanga* 245.
[836] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* V, 94.

The third root defilement, delusion (*moha*), is not enumerated separately among the hindrances but can be found underlying the remaining three.

Sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*) is a compound hindrance made up of two components: sloth, which is mental dullness, inertia, or stiffness; and torpor, which is indolence or drowsiness. Restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) is another double hindrance, restlessness being explained as mental excitement, agitation, or disquietude, and worry as the sense of guilt aroused by moral transgressions. Finally, the hindrance of doubt (*vicikicchā*) is explained as a wavering mind, or indecisiveness.

The *Buddha* offers two sets of similes to illustrate the detrimental effect of the hindrances. The first compares the five hindrances to five types of calamity: sense desire is like a debt, ill will like a disease, sloth and torpor like imprisonment, restless and worry like slavery, and doubt like being lost on a desert road. Release from the hindrances is to be seen as freedom from debt, good health, release from prison, emancipation from slavery, and arriving at a place of safety.[837] The second set of similes compares the hindrances to five kinds of impurities affecting a bowl of water, preventing a keen-sighted man from seeing his own reflection as it really is. Sense desire is like a bowl of water mixed with brightly colored paints, ill will like a bowl of boiling water, sloth and torpor like water covered by mossy plants, restlessness and worry like water blown into ripples by the wind, and doubt like muddy water. Just as the keen-eyed man would not be able to see his reflection in these five kinds of water, so, one whose mind is obsessed by the five hindrances does not know and see as it is his own good, the good of others, or the good of both.[838] Although there are numerous defilements opposed to the first *jhāna*, the five hindrances alone are called its "factors of abandoning." One reason, according to the *Visuddhimagga*, is that the hindrances are specifically obstructive to *jhāna*, each hindrance impeding, in its own way, the mind's capacity for concentration.

> *"The mind affected by desire for gratification of the senses does not become concentrated on a unitary object, or, being overwhelmed by sense desire, it does not enter on the way to abandoning the sense-desire element. When disturbed by ill will towards an object, it does not rest uninterruptedly. When overcome by sloth and torpor, it is unwieldy. When seized by mental agitation and worry, it is restless and buzzes about. When stricken by indecisiveness, it fails to focus on the way to accomplish the attainment of jhāna. Therefore, it is these only that are called 'factors of abandonment.' because they are specifically obstructive to jhāna."*[839]

A second reason for confining the first *jhāna*'s factors of abandoning to the five hindrances is to permit a direct alignment to be made between the hindrances and the jhānic factors. Buddhaghosa states that the abandonment of the five hindrances alone is mentioned in connection with *jhāna*, because the hindrances are the direct enemies of the

[837] *Dīgha Nikāya* I, 71—73.
[838] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* V, 121—124.
[839] *Visuddhimagga* 146.

five *jhāna* factors, which the latter must eliminate and abolish. To support his point, the commentator cites a passage demonstrating a one-to-one correspondence between the *jhāna* factors and the hindrances: one-pointedness is opposed to sense desire, rapture to ill will, applied thought to sloth and torpor, happiness to restlessness and worry, and sustained thought to doubt.[840] Thus, each *jhāna* factor is seen as having the specific task of eliminating a particular obstruction to the *jhāna*, and, to correlate these obstructions with the five *jhāna* factors, they are collected into a scheme of five hindrances.

The standard passage describing the attainment of the first *jhāna* says that the *jhāna* is entered upon by one who is "secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of mind." The *Visuddhimagga* explains that there are three kinds of seclusion relevant to the present context — namely, (1) bodily seclusion (*kāyaviveka*); (2) mental seclusion (*cittaviveka*); and (3) seclusion by suppression (*vikkhambhana-viveka*).[841] These three terms allude to two distinct sets of exegetical categories. The first two belong to a threefold arrangement made up of bodily seclusion, mental seclusion, and "seclusion from the substance" (*upadhiviveka*). The first means physical withdrawal from active social engagement into a condition of solitude for the purpose of devoting time and energy to spiritual development. The second, which generally presupposes the first, means the seclusion of the mind from its entanglement in defilements (*kilesa*); it is, in effect, equivalent to concentration of at least the access level. The third, "seclusion from the substance," is *nibbāna*, liberation from the elements of phenomenal existence. The achievement of the first *jhāna* does not depend on the third, which is its outcome rather than its prerequisite, but it does require physical solitude and the separation of the mind from defilements, hence, bodily and mental seclusion. The third type of seclusion pertinent to the context, seclusion by suppression, belongs to a different scheme generally discussed under the heading of "abandonment" (*pahāna*) rather than "seclusion." The type of abandonment required for the attainment of *jhāna* is abandonment by suppression, which means the removal of the hindrances by force of concentration similar to the pressing down of weeds in a pond by means of a porous pot.[842]

The work of overcoming the five hindrances is accomplished through the gradual training (*anupubbasikkhā*), which the *Buddha* has laid down so often in the *suttas*, such as the Sāmaññaphala Sutta[843] and the Cūḷahatthipadopama Sutta.[844] The gradual training is a step-by-step process designed to lead the practitioner gradually to liberation. The training begins with moral discipline, the undertaking and observance of specific rules of

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[840] *Visuddhimagga* 141. Buddhaghosa ascribes the passage he cites in support of this correspondence to the "Peṭaka," but it cannot be found anywhere in the present *Tipiṭika*, nor in the exegetical work named *Petakopadesa*.

[841] *Visuddhimagga* 140.

[842] The other two types of abandoning are the "substitution of opposites" (*tadangappahāna*), which means the replacement of unwholesome states by wholesome ones specifically opposed to them, and abandoning by eradication (*samucchedappahāna*), the final destruction of defilements by the supramundane paths (see *Visuddhimagga* 693—696).

[843] *Dīgha Nikāya*, no. 2.

[844] *Majjhima Nikāya*, no. 27.

conduct which enable the disciple to control the coarser modes of bodily and verbal misconduct through which the hindrances find an outlet. With moral discipline as a basis, the disciple practices the restraint of the senses. He does not seize upon the general appearances of the beguiling features of things, but guards and masters his sense faculties so that sensory attractive and repugnant objects no longer become grounds for desire and aversion. Then, endowed with the self-restraint, he develops mindfulness and discernment (*sati-sampajañña*) in all his activities and postures, examining everything he does with clear awareness as to its purpose and suitability. He also cultivates contentment with a minimum of robes, food, shelter, and other requisites.

Once he has fulfilled these preliminaries, the disciple is prepared to go into solitude to develop the *jhānas*, and it is here that he directly confronts the five hindrances. The elimination of the hindrances requires that the meditator honestly appraise his own mind. When sense desire, ill will, and the other hindrances are present, he must recognize that they are present, and he must investigate the conditions that lead to their arising: he must scrupulously avoid these conditions. The meditator must also understand the appropriate antidotes for each of the five hindrances. The *Buddha* says that all the hindrances arise through unwise consideration (*ayoniso manasikāra*) and that they can be eliminated by wise consideration (*yoniso manasikāra*). Each hindrance, however, has its own specific antidote. Thus, wise consideration of the repulsive nature of things is the antidote to sense desire; wise consideration of loving-kindness counteracts ill will; wise consideration of the elements of effort, exertion, and striving opposes sloth and torpor; wise consideration of tranquility of mind removes restlessness and worry; and wise consideration of the real qualities of things eliminates doubt.[845]

> *"Having given up covetousness [that is, sense desire] with regard to the world, he dwells with a heart free of covetousness; he cleanses his mind from covetousness. Having given up the blemish of ill will, he dwells without ill will; friendly and compassionate towards all living beings, he cleanses his mind from the blemishes of ill will. Having given up sloth and torpor, he dwells free from sloth and torpor, in the perception of light; mindful and clearly comprehending, he cleanses his mind from sloth and torpor. Having given up restlessness and worry, he dwells without restlessness; his mind being calmed within, he cleanses it from restlessness and worry. Having given up doubt, he dwells as one who has passed beyond doubt; being free from uncertainty about wholesome things, he cleanses his mind from doubt...*
>
> *"And when he sees himself free of these five hindrances, joy arises; in him who is joyful, rapture arises; in him whose mind is enraptured, the body is stilled; the body being stilled, he feels happiness; and a happy mind finds concentration. Then, quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states of*

[845] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* V, 105—106.

> *mind, he enters and dwells in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion."*[846] [847]

The Factors of the First *Jhāna*

The first *jhāna* possesses five component factors: (1) applied thought (*vitakka*); (2) sustained thought (*vicāra*); (3) rapture, ecstasy, or zest (*pīti*); (4) happiness (*sukha*); and (5) one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*). Four of these are explicitly mentioned in the formula for the *jhāna*; the fifth, one-pointedness, is mentioned elsewhere in the *suttas* but is already suggested by the notion of *jhāna* itself. These five states receive their name, first because they lead the mind from the level of ordinary consciousness to the jhānic level, and second because they constitute the first *jhāna* and give it its distinct definition.

The *jhāna* factors are first aroused by the meditator's initial efforts to concentrate upon one of the prescribed objects for developing *jhāna*. As he fixes his mind on the preliminary object, such as a *kasiṇa* disk, a point is eventually reached where he can perceive the object as clearly with his eyes closed as with them open. This visualized object is called the "acquired sign" (*uggaha-nimitta*). As he concentrates on the acquired sign, his efforts call into play the embryonic *jhāna* factors, which grow in force, duration, and prominence as a result of the meditative exertion. These factors, being incompatible with the hindrances, weaken them, exclude them, and hold them at bay. With continued practice, the acquired sign gives rise to a purified luminous replica of itself called the "counterpart sign" (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*), the manifestation of which marks the complete suppression of the hindrances and the attainment of access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*). All three events — the suppression of the hindrances, the arising of the counterpart sign, and the attainment of access concentration — take place at precisely the same moment, without interval.[848] And, though the process of mental cultivation may have previously required the elimination of different hindrances at different times, when the level of access concentration is achieved, they all subside together:

> *"Simultaneously with his acquiring the counterpart sign, his desire for gratification of the senses is abandoned by suppression owing to his giving no attention externally to sense desires [as object]. And owing to his abandoning of approval, ill will is abandoned too, as is pus with the abandoning of blood. Likewise, sloth and torpor are abandoned through exertion of energy, restlessness and worry are abandoned through devotion to peaceful things that cause no remorse, and uncertainty about the Master who teaches the way, about the way,*

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[846] *Dīgha Nikāya* I, 73—74.

[847] Adapted from Nyanaponika Thera, *The Five Mental Hindrances and Their Conquest* (= The Wheel Publication, no. 26) (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1961]). This booklet contains a full compilation of texts on the hindrances.

[848] *Visuddhimagga* 126.

and about the fruit of the way is abandoned through the actual experience of the distinction attained. Thus, the five hindrances are abandoned."[849]

Though the mental factors determinative of the first *jhāna* are present in access concentration, they do not as yet possess sufficient strength to constitute the *jhāna*, but are strong enough only to exclude the hindrances. With continued practice, however, the nascent *jhāna* factors grow in strength until they are capable of driving the mind into *jhāna*. Because of the instrumental role these factors play both in the attainment and constitution of the first *jhāna*, they deserve closer scrutiny.

Applied Thought (*vitakka*)

The word *vitakka* frequently appears in the texts in conjunction with the word *vicāra.* The pair signify two interconnected but distinct aspects of the thought process, and, to bring out the difference between them (as well as their common character), we translate the one as "applied thought" and the other as "sustained thought."[850]

In both the *suttas* and the *Abhidhamma*, "applied thought" is defined as "the application of the mind to its object" (*cetaso abhiniropana*), a function which the *Atthasālinī* illustrates thus: "Just as someone ascends the king's palace in dependence on a relative or friend dear to the king, so the mind ascends the object in dependence on applied thought."[851] This function of applying the mind to the object is common to the wide variety of modes in which the mental factor of applied thought occurs, ranging from sense discrimination to imagination, reasoning and deliberation, and to the practice of concentration culminating in the first *jhāna*. Applied thought can be unwholesome, as in thoughts of sense desire, ill will, hatred, and cruelty, or wholesome, as in thoughts of renunciation, benevolence, and compassion.[852]

In *jhāna*, applied thought is invariably wholesome, and its function of directing the mind upon its object stands forth with special clarity. To convey this, the *Visuddhi-magga* explains that, in *jhāna*, the function of applied thought is "to strike at and thresh" — for the meditator is said, by virtue of it, to have the object struck at by applied thought, threshed by applied thought."[853] The *Milindapañha* makes the same point by defining applied thought as "absorption" (*appanā*): "Just as a carpenter drives a well-fashioned piece of wood into a joint, so applied thought has the characteristic of absorption."[854]

The object of *jhāna* into which *vitakka* drives the mind and its concomitant states is the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*), which emerges from the acquired sign

[849] *Visuddhimagga* 189.
[850] "Applied thought" (*vitakka*) is also called "initial application," while "sustained thought" (*vicāra*) is also called "sustained application."
[851] *Atthasālinī* 157.
[852] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 116.
[853] *Visuddhimagga* 142
[854] *Milindapañha* 62.

(*uggaha-nimitta*) as the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are suppressed and the mind enters access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*). The *Visuddhimagga* explains the difference between the two signs thus:

> *"In the acquired sign, any fault in the kasiṇa is duplicated. But the counterpart sign appears as if breaking out from the acquired sign, and a hundred times, a thousand times more purified, like a looking-glass disk drawn from its case, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed, like the moon's disk coming out from behind a cloud, like cranes against a thunder cloud. But it has neither color nor shape; for if it had, it would be cognizable by the eye, gross, susceptible of comprehension (by insight), and stamped with the three characteristics. But it is not like that. For it is born only of perception in one who has obtained concentration, being a mere mode of appearance."*[855]

The counterpart sign is the object of both access concentration and *jhāna*, which differ neither in their object nor in the removal of the hindrances but in the strength of their respective *jhāna* factors. In the former, the factors are still weak, not yet fully developed, while in the *jhāna*, they are strong enough to make the mind fully absorbed in the object. In this process, applied thought (*vitakka*) is the factor primarily responsible for directing the mind towards the counterpart sign and thrusting it in with the force of full absorption.

Sustained Thought (*vicāra*)

Vicāra represents a more developed phase of the thought process than *vitakka*. The Commentaries explain that it has the characteristic of "continued pressure" on the object.[856] Applied thought (*vitakka*) is described as the first impact of the mind on the object, the gross inceptive phase of thought; sustained thought (*vicāra*) is described as the act of anchoring the mind on the object, the subtle phase of continued mental pressure. Buddhaghosa illustrates the difference between the two with a series of similes. Applied thought is like striking a bell, sustained thought like the ringing; applied thought is like a bee's flying towards a flower, sustained thought like its buzzing around the flower; applied thought is like a compass pin that stays fixed to the center of a circle, sustained thought like the pin that revolves around.[857]

These similes make it clear that applied thought and sustained thought, though functionally associated, perform different tasks. Applied thought brings the mind to the object, sustained thought fixes and anchors it there. Applied thought focuses the mind on the object, sustained thought examines and inspects what is focused on. Applied thought brings a deepening of concentration by again and again leading the mind back to the

[855] *Visuddhimagga* 125—126.
[856] *Visuddhimagga* 142.
[857] *Visuddhimagga* 142—143.

same object, sustained thought sustains the concentration achieved by keeping the mind anchored on that object.

Rapture (*pīti*)

The third factor present in the first *jhāna* is *pīti,* usually translated as "rapture," "zest," "ecstasy," or "bliss." In the *suttas*, *pīti* is sometimes said to arise from another quality called "*pāmojja*," translated as "joy," "gladness," or "delight," which springs up with the abandonment of the five hindrances. When the disciple sees the five hindrances abandoned in himself, "gladness arises within him; thus gladdened, rapture arises in him; and when he is rapturous, his body becomes tranquil."[858] Tranquility, in turn, leads to happiness, on the basis of which the mind becomes concentrated. Thus, rapture precedes the actual arising of the first *jhāna*, but persists throughout the remaining stages up to the third *jhāna*.

The *Vibhanga* defines *pīti* as "gladness, joy, joyfulness, mirth, merriment, exultation, exhilaration, and satisfaction of mind."[859] The Commentaries ascribe to it the characteristic of endearing, the function of refreshing the body and mind or pervading with rapture, and the manifestation as elation.[860] Shwe Zan Aung explains that "*pīti* abstracted means interest of varying degrees of intensity, in an object felt as desirable, or as calculated to bring happiness."[861]

When defined in terms of agency, *pīti* is that which creates interest in the object; when defined in terms of its nature, it is the interest in the object. Because it creates a positive interest in the object, the *jhāna* factor of rapture (*pīti*) is able to counter and suppress the hindrance of ill will (*vyāpāda*), a state of aversion implying a negative evaluation of the object.

Rapture is graded into five categories: (1) minor rapture (*khuddakā pīti*); (2) momentary rapture (*khaṇikā pīti*); (3) showering rapture (*okkantikā pīti*); (4) uplifting rapture (*ubbegā pīti*); and (5) all-pervading rapture (*pharaṇā pīti*). Minor rapture is generally the first to appear in the progressive development of meditation; it is capable of causing the hairs of the body to stand on end. Momentary rapture, which is like lightning, comes next but cannot be sustained for long. Showering rapture runs through the body in waves, producing a thrill but without leaving a lasting impact. Uplifting rapture, which can cause levitation, is more sustained but still tends to disturb concentration. The form of rapture most conducive to the attainment of *jhāna* is all-pervading rapture, which is said to suffuse the whole body so that it becomes like a full bladder or like a mountain cavern inundated with a mighty flood of water. The *Visuddhimagga* states that what is intended by the *jhāna* factor of rapture is this all-

[858] *Dīgha Nikāya* I, 73.
[859] *Vibhanga* 257.
[860] *Visuddhimagga* 143.
[861] Shwe Zan Aung, *Compendium of Philosophy* (London: Pāḷi Text Society [1960]), p. 243.

pervading rapture "which is the root of absorption and comes by growth into association with absorption."[862]

Happiness (*sukha*)

As a factor of the first *jhāna*, *sukha* signifies pleasant feeling. The word is explicitly defined in this sense by the *Vibhanga* in its analysis of the first *jhāna*: "Therein, what is happiness? Mental pleasure, mental happiness, the felt pleasure, and happiness born of mind-contact, pleasurable and happy feeling born of mind-contact — this is called 'happiness'."[863] The *Visuddhimagga* explains that *sukha* in the first *jhāna* has the characteristic of gratifying, the function of intensifying associated states, and, as manifestation, the rendering of aid to its associated states.[864]

Rapture and happiness are linked together in a very close relationship, but, though the two are difficult to distinguish, they are not identical. Happiness is a feeling (*vedanā*); rapture a mental formation (*saṁkhāra*). Happiness always accompanies rapture, so that, when rapture is present, happiness must always be present; but rapture does not always accompany happiness, for, in the third *jhāna*, as we shall see, there is happiness but no rapture. The *Atthasālinī*, which explains rapture as "delight in the attaining of the desired object" and happiness as "the enjoyment of the taste of what is required," illustrates the difference by means of a simile:

> *Rapture is like a weary traveler in the desert in summer, who hears of or sees water or a shady wood. Happiness is like his enjoying the water or entering the forest shade. For a man who, traveling along the path through a great desert and overcome by the heat, is thirsty and desirous of drink, if he saw a man on the way, would ask "Where is water?" The other would say, "Beyond the wood is a dense forest with a natural lake. Go there, and you will get some." He, hearing these words, would be glad and delighted and, as he went, would see lotus leaves, etc., fallen on the ground and become more glad and delighted. Going onwards, he would see men with wet clothes and hair, hear the sounds of wild fowl and pea-fowl, etc., see the dense forest of green like a net of jewels growing by the edge of the natural lake; he would see the water lily, the lotus, the white lily, etc.; growing in the lake, he would see the clear transparent water; he would be all the more glad and delighted, would descend into the natural lake, bathe and drink at pleasure and, his oppression being allayed, he would eat the fibers and stalks of the lilies, adorn himself with the blue lotus, carry on his shoulders the roots of the mandālaka,*[865] *ascend from the lake, put on his clothes, dry the bathing cloth in the sun, and, in the cool shade where the breeze blew ever so gently, lay himself*

[862] *Visuddhimagga* 144.
[863] *Vibhanga* 257.
[864] *Visuddhimagga* 145.
[865] A water-plant (a kind of lotus).

> *down and say: "O bliss!, O bliss!" Thus should this illustration be applied. The time of gladness and delight from when he heard of the natural lake and the dense forest till he saw the water is like rapture having the manner of gladness and delight at the object in view. The time when, after his bath and drink, he laid himself down in the cool shade, saying, "O bliss!, O bliss!," etc., is the sense of happiness grown strong, established in that mode of enjoying the taste of the object.*[866]

Since rapture and happiness co-exist in the first *jhāna*, this simile should not be taken to imply that they are mutually exclusive. Its purport is to suggest that rapture gains prominence before happiness, for which it helps provide a causal foundation.

In the description of the first *jhāna*, rapture and happiness are said to be "born of seclusion" and to suffuse the whole body of the meditator in such a way that there is no part of his body which remains unaffected by them:

> *"Monks, secluded from sense pleasure... a Monk enters and dwells in the first jhāna. He steeps, drenches, fills, and suffuses his body with the rapture and happiness born of seclusion, so that there is no part of his entire body that is not suffused with this rapture and happiness. Just as a skilled bath-attendant or his apprentice might strew bathing powder in a copper basin, sprinkle it again and again with water, and knead it together so that the mass of bathing soap would be pervaded, suffused, and saturated with moisture inside and out yet would not ooze moisture, so, a Monk steeps, drenches, fills, and suffuses his body with the rapture and happiness born of seclusion, so that there is no part of his entire body that is not suffused with this rapture and happiness born of seclusion."*[867]

One-Pointedness (*ekaggatā*)

Unlike the previous four *jhāna* factors, one-pointedness (*ekagattā*) is not specifically mentioned in the standard formula for the first *jhāna*, but it is included among the *jhāna* factors by the Mahāvedalla Sutta[868] as well as in the *Abhidhamma* and the Commentaries. One-pointedness is a universal mental concomitant, the factor by virtue of which the mind is centered upon its object. It brings the mind to a single point, the point occupied by the object.

One-pointedness is used in the text as a synonym for concentration (*samādhi*), which has the characteristic of non-distraction, the function of eliminating distractions, non-wavering as its manifestation, and happiness as its proximate cause.[869] As a *jhāna* factor, one-pointedness is always directed towards a wholesome object and wards off

[866] *Atthasālinī* 160—161.
[867] *Dīgha Nikāya* I, 74.
[868] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 294.
[869] *Visuddhimagga* 85.

unwholesome influences, in particular, the hindrance of desire for gratification of the senses (*kāmacchanda*). Inasmuch as the hindrances are absent in *jhāna*, one-pointedness acquires special strength, based on the previous sustained effort of concentration.

Besides the five *jhāna* factors, the first *jhāna* contains a great number of other mental factors functioning in unison as coordinate members of a single state of consciousness. Already, the Anupada Sutta[870] lists such additional components of the first *jhāna* as contact, feeling, perception, volition, consciousness, desire, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention. In the *Abhidhamma* literature, this is extended still further up to thirty-three indispensable components. Nevertheless, only five states are called the "factors" of the first *jhāna*, for only these have the functions of inhibiting the five hindrances and fixing the mind in absorption. For the *jhāna* to arise, all these five factors must be present simultaneously, exercising their special operations:

> *But applied thought directs the mind onto the object; sustained thought keeps it anchored there. Rapture produced by the success of the effort refreshes the mind whose effort has succeeded through not being distracted by those hindrances; and happiness intensifies it for the same reason. Then, one-pointedness, aided by this directing onto, this anchoring, this refreshing, and this intensifying, evenly and rightly centers the mind with its remaining associated states on the object consisting in one-pointedness. Consequently, possession of five factors should be understood as the arising of these five, namely, applied thought, sustained thought, rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness of mind. For it is when these are arisen that jhāna is said to be arisen, which is why they are called the "five factors of possession."*[871]

Each *jhāna* factor serves as support for the one which follows it. Applied thought must direct the mind to its object in order for sustained thought to anchor it there. Only when the mind is anchored can the interest develop which will culminate in rapture. As rapture develops, it brings happiness to maturity, and this spiritual happiness, by providing an alternative to the fickle pleasures of the senses, aids the growth of one-pointedness. In this way, as Nāgasena explains, all the other wholesome states lead to concentration, which stands at their head like the apex on the roof of a house.[872]

Perfecting the First *Jhāna*

The difference between access (*upacāra*) and absorption (*appanā*) concentration, as we have said, does not lie in the absence of the hindrances, which is common to both, but in the relative strength of the *jhāna* factors. In access concentration, the factors are weak so that concentration is fragile, comparable to a child who walks a few steps and

[870] *Majjhima Nikāya* III, 25.
[871] *Visuddhimagga* 146.
[872] *Milindapañha* 38—39.

then falls down. But in absorption concentration, the *jhāna* factors are strong and well developed so that the mind can remain continuously in concentration, just as a healthy man can remain standing on his feet for a whole day and night.[873]

Because full absorption offers the benefit of intensified concentration, a meditator who gains the level of access concentration is encouraged to strive for the attainment of *jhāna*. To develop his practice, several important measures are recommended.[874] The meditator should live in a suitable dwelling, rely upon a suitable alms resort, avoid profitless talk, associate only with spiritually-minded companions, make use only of suitable food, live in a congenial climate, and maintain his practice in a suitable posture.[875] He should also cultivate the ten kinds of skill in absorption: (1) He should clean his lodging and his physical body so that they are conducive to clear meditation, (2) balance his spiritual faculties by seeing that faith is balanced with wisdom and energy with concentration, and (3) he must be skillful in producing and developing the sign of concentration. (4) He should exert the mind when it is slack, (5) restrain it when it is agitated, (6) encourage it when it is restless or dejected, and (7) look at the mind with equanimity when all is proceeding well. The meditator (8) should avoid distracting persons, (9) should approach people experienced in concentration, and (10) should be firm in his resolution to attain *jhāna*.

After attaining the first *jhāna* a few times, the meditator is not advised to set out immediately striving for the second *jhāna*. This would be a foolish and profitless spiritual ambition. Before he is prepared to make the second *jhāna* the goal of his endeavor, he must first bring the first *jhāna* to perfection. If he is too eager to reach the second *jhāna* before he has perfected the first, he is likely to fail to gain the second and find himself unable to regain the first. The *Buddha* compares such a meditator to a foolish cow who, while still unfamiliar with her own pasture, sets out for new pastures and gets lost in the mountains: she fails to find food or drink and is unable to find her way home.[876]

The perfecting of the first *jhāna* involves two steps: (1) the extension of the sign and (2) the achievement of the five masteries. The extension of the sign means extending the size of the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*), the object of the *jhāna*. Beginning with a small area, the size of one or two fingers, the meditator gradually learns to broaden the sign until the mental image can be made to cover the world-sphere or even beyond.[877]

Following this, the meditator should try to acquire five kinds of mastery (*vasī*) over the *jhāna*: (1) mastery in adverting (*āvajjana-vasī*); (2) mastery in attaining (*samāpajjana-vasī*); (3) mastery in resolving (*adhiṭṭhāna-vasī*); (4) mastery in emerging

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[873] *Visuddhimagga* 126.

[874] The following is based on *Visuddhimagga* 126—135.

[875] Sit comfortably: (A) legs — crossed in either full-lotus or half-lotus position; sitting upright in a chair is also acceptable, but lying down is not; (B) arms — folded in front, with right hand resting on left, palms upward, thumbs touching; (C) back — erect; (D) eyes — lightly closed; (E) jaw — slightly open; (F) tongue — pressed gently against alveolar ridge; (G) head — tilted slightly forward.

[876] *Anguttara Nikāya* IV, 418—419.

[877] *Visuddhimagga* 152—153.

(*vuṭṭhāna-vasī*); and (5) mastery in reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇa-vasī*).[878] Mastery in adverting is the ability to advert to the *jhāna* factors one by one after emerging from the *jhāna*, wherever he wants, whenever he wants, and for as long as he wants. Mastery in attaining is the ability to enter upon *jhāna* quickly. Mastery in resolving is the ability to remain in the *jhāna* for exactly the pre-determined length of time. Mastery in emerging is the ability to emerge from *jhāna* quickly without difficulty. Mastery in reviewing is the ability to review the *jhāna* and its factors with retrospective knowledge immediately after emerging from them. When the meditator has achieved this fivefold mastery, then he is ready to strive for the second *jhāna*.

THE HIGHER JHĀNAS

Overview

Now, we will survey the higher states of *jhāna*. First, we will discuss the remaining three *jhānas* of the fine-material sphere, using the descriptive formulas of the *suttas* as our starting point and the later literature as our source for the methods of practice that lead to these attainments. Following this, we will consider the four meditative states that pertain to the immaterial sphere, which, consequently, are called the "immaterial," or "formless," *jhānas* (*arūpajjhāna*). Our examination will bring out the dynamic character of the process by which the *jhānas* are successively achieved. The attainment of the higher *jhānas* of the fine-material sphere, we will see, involves the *successive elimination of the grosser factors* and the bringing to prominence of the subtler ones, while the attainment of the formless *jhānas* involves the *replacement of grosser objects* with successively more refined objects. From our study, it will become clear that the *jhānas* link together in a graded sequence of development in which the lower serves as the basis for the higher, and the higher intensifies and purifies states already present in the lower. We will end the discussion with a brief look at the connection between the *jhānas* and the Buddhist teaching of rebirth.

The Higher Fine-material *Jhānas*

The formula for the attainment of the second *jhāna* runs as follows:

> *"With the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought, he enters and dwells in the second jhāna, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without applied thought and sustained thought, and is filled with rapture and happiness born of concentration."*[879]

[878] For a discussion, see *Visuddhimagga* 154—155.
[879] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 181; *Vibhanga* 245.

The second *jhāna*, like the first, is attained by eliminating the factors to be abandoned and by developing the factors of possession. In this case, however, the factors to be abandoned are the two initial factors of the first *jhāna* itself, applied thought (*vitakka*) and sustained thought (*vicāra*), while the factors of possession are the three remaining *jhāna* factors (*jhānanga*): (1) rapture (*pīti*); (2) happiness (*sukha*); and (3) one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). Hence, the formula begins "with the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought," and then mentions the *jhāna's* positive endowments.

After achieving the five kinds of mastery over the first *jhāna*, a meditator who wishes to reach the second *jhāna* should enter the first *jhāna* and, after emerging from it, contemplate its defects. These are twofold: one, which may be called the "defect of proximate corruption," is the nearness of the five hindrances, against which the first *jhāna* provides only a relatively mild safeguard; the other defect, inherent to the first *jhāna*, is its inclusion of applied and sustained thought, which now appear as gross, even as impediments needing to be eliminated in order to attain the more peaceful and subtle second *jhāna*.

By reflecting upon the second *jhāna* as more tranquil and sublime than the first, the meditator ends his attachment to the first *jhāna* and engages in renewed striving with the aim of reaching the higher stage. He directs his mind to his meditation subject — which must be one capable of inducing the higher *jhānas* such as a *kasiṇa* or the breath — and resolves to overcome applied and sustained thought. When his practice comes to maturity, the two kinds of thought subside, and the second *jhāna* arises. In the second *jhāna*, only three of the original five *jhāna* factors remain — rapture, happiness, and one-pointedness. Moreover, with the elimination of the two grosser factors, these have acquired a subtler and more peaceful tone.[880]

Besides the main *jhāna* factors, the canonical formula includes several other states in its description of the second *jhāna*. "Internal confidence" (*ajjhattaṁ sampasādanaṁ*), conveys the twofold meaning of faith and tranquility. In the first *jhāna*, the meditator's faith lacks full clarity and serenity due to "the disturbance created by applied and sustained thought, like water ruffled by ripples and wavelets."[881] But, when applied and sustained thought subside, the mind becomes very peaceful, and the meditator's faith acquires fuller confidence.

The formula also mentions unification of mind (*cetaso ekodibhāvaṁ*), which is identified with one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), or concentration (*samādhi*). Though present in the first *jhāna*, concentration only gains special mention in connection with the second *jhāna*, since it is here that it acquires prominence. In the first *jhāna*, concentration was

[880] Based upon the distinction between applied and sustained thought, the *Abhidhamma* presents a fivefold division of the *jhānas*, obtained by recognizing the sequential rather than simultaneous elimination of the two kinds of thought. On this account, a meditator with less advanced faculties eliminates applied thought first and attains a second *jhāna* with four factors, including sustained thought, and a third *jhāna* identical with the second *jhāna* of the fourfold scheme. In contrast, a meditator with more advanced faculties quickly comprehends the defects of both applied and sustained thought and so eliminates them both at the same time.

[881] *Visuddhimagga* 157.

still imperfect, being subject to the disturbing influence of applied and sustained thought. For the same reason, this *jhāna*, along with its constituent rapture and happiness, is said to be "born of concentration" (*samādhijaṁ*): "It is only this concentration that is quite worthy to be called 'concentration' because of its complete confidence and extreme immobility due to absence of disturbance by applied and sustained thought."[882]

To attain the third *jhāna*, the meditator must use the same method he used to ascend from the first *jhāna* to the second. He must master the second *jhāna* in the five ways, enter and emerge from it, and reflect upon its defects. In this case, the defect of proximate corruption is the nearness of applied and sustained thought, which threaten to disrupt the serenity of the second *jhāna*; its inherent defect is the presence of rapture (*pīti*), which now appears as a gross factor that should be discarded. Aware of the imperfections in the second *jhāna*, the meditator cultivates indifference towards it and aspires instead for the peace and sublimity of the third *jhāna*, towards the attainment of which he now directs his efforts. When his practice matures, he enters the third *jhāna*, which has the two *jhāna* factors that remain when the rapture disappears, happiness and one-pointedness, and which the *suttas* describe as follows:

> *"With the fading away of rapture, he dwells in equanimity, mindful and discerning; and he experiences in his own person that happiness of which the Noble Ones say: 'Happily lives he who is equanimous and mindful' — thus, he enters and dwells in the third jhāna."*[883]

The formula indicates that the third *jhāna* contains, besides its two defining factors, three additional components not included among the *jhāna* factors: (1) equanimity (*upekkhā*); (2) mindfulness (*sati*); and (3) discernment (*sampajañña*). Equanimity is mentioned twice. The Pāḷi word for equanimity, "*upekkhā*," occurs in the texts with a wide range of meanings, the most important being neutral feeling — that is, feeling which is neither painful nor pleasant — and the mental quality of inner balance, or equipoise, called "specific neutrality" (*tatramajjhattatā*).[884] The equanimity referred to in the formula is a mode of specific neutrality which belongs to the aggregate of mental formations (*saṁkhārakkhandha*) and thus should not be confused with equanimity as neutral feeling. Though the two are often associated, each can exist independently of the other, and, in the third *jhāna*, equanimity as specific neutrality co-exists with happiness (*sukha*), or pleasant feeling.

The meditator in third *jhāna* is also said to be mindful and discerning, which points to another pair of frequently conjoined mental functions. Mindfulness (*sati*), in this context, means the remembrance of the meditation object, the constant bearing of the object in mind without allowing it to float away. Discernment (*sampajañña*) is an aspect of wisdom, or understanding, which scrutinizes the object and grasps its nature free from delusion (*moha*). Though these two factors were already present even in the first two

[882] *Visuddhimagga* 158.
[883] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 182; *Vibhanga* 245.
[884] *Visuddhimagga* 161.

jhānas, they are first mentioned only in connection with the third, since it is here that their efficacy becomes manifest. The two are needed particularly to avoid a return to rapture. Just as a suckling calf, removed from its mother and left unguarded, again approaches the mother, so, the happiness of *jhāna* tends to veer towards rapture, its natural partner, if unguarded by mindfulness and discernment.[885] The task of mindfulness and discernment is to prevent this, and the consequent loss of the third *jhāna*, from taking place.

The attainment of the fourth *jhāna* commences with the aforesaid procedure. In this case, the meditator sees that the third *jhāna* is threatened by the proximity of rapture, which is ever ready to swell up again due to its natural affinity with happiness. He also sees that it is inherently defective due to the presence of happiness, a gross factor which provides fuel for clinging. He then contemplates the state where equanimous feeling and one-pointedness subsist together — the fourth *jhāna* — as far more peaceful and secure than anything he has so far experienced, and, therefore, as far more desirable. Taking as his object the same counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) he took for the earlier *jhāna*, he strengthens his efforts in concentration for the purpose of abandoning the gross factor of happiness and entering the higher *jhāna*. When his practice matures, the mind enters absorption into the fourth *jhāna*:

> *"With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he enters and dwells in the fourth jhāna, which has neither pain nor pleasure and has purity of mindfulness due to equanimity."*[886]

The first part of this formula specifies the conditions for the attainment of this *jhāna* — also called the "neither-painful-nor-pleasant liberation of mind"[887] — to be the abandoning of four kinds of feeling incompatible with it, the first two signifying bodily feelings, the latter two the corresponding mental feelings. The formula also introduces several new terms and phrases which have not been encountered previously. First, it mentions a new feeling, "neither pain nor pleasure" (*adukkhamasukha*), which remains after the other four feelings have subsided. This feeling, also called "equanimous," or "neutral feeling," replaces happiness as the concomitant feeling of the *jhāna* and also figures as one of the *jhāna* factors. Thus, this attainment has two *jhāna* factors: (1) neutral feeling (*upekkhā*) and (2) one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*). Previously, the ascent from one *jhāna* to the next was marked by the progressive elimination of the coarser *jhāna* factors, but none were added to replace those which were excluded. But now, in the move from the third to the fourth *jhāna*, a substitution occurs, neutral feeling moving in to take the place of happiness.

In addition, we also find a new phrase composed of familiar terms, "purity of mindfulness due to equanimity" (*upekkhāsatipārisuddhi*). The *Vibhanga* explains: "This

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[885] *Atthasālinī* 219.
[886] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 182; *Vibhanga* 245.
[887] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 296.

mindfulness is cleared, purified, clarified by equanimity,"[888] and Buddhaghosa adds: "for the mindfulness in this *jhāna* is quite purified, and its purification is brought about by equanimity, not by anything else."[889] The equanimity which purifies the mindfulness is not neutral feeling, as might be supposed, but specific neutrality, the sublime impartiality free from attachment and aversion, which also pertains to this *jhāna*. Though both specific neutrality and mindfulness were present in the lower three *jhānas*, none among these is said to have "purity of mindfulness due to equanimity." The reason is that, in the lower *jhānas*, the equanimity present was not purified itself, being overshadowed by opposing states and lacking association with equanimous feeling. It is like a crescent moon which exists by day but cannot be seen because of the sunlight and the bright sky. But in the fourth *jhāna*, where equanimity gains the support of equanimous feeling, it shines forth like the crescent moon at night and purifies mindfulness and the other associated states.[890]

The Immaterial *Jhānas*

Beyond the four form, or fine-material, *jhānas* lie four higher attainments in the scale of concentration, referred to in the *suttas* as the "peaceful immaterial (*arūpa*) liberations transcending material form" (*santā vimokkhā atikammarūpe aruppā*).[891] In the Commentaries, they are also called the "immaterial *jhānas*," and, even though this expression is not found in the *suttas*, it seems appropriate, inasmuch as these states correspond to jhānic levels of consciousness and continue the same process of mental unification initiated by the original four *jhānas*, now usually called the "fine-material *jhānas*." The immaterial *jhānas* are designated, not by numerical names like their predecessors, but by the names of their objective spheres: (1) the sphere of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*); (2) the sphere of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañ-cāyatana*); (3) the sphere of nothingness (*akincaññāyatana*); and (4) the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception (*n'eva saññā-n'āsaññāyatana*). They receive the designation "formless" (*arūpa*), or "immaterial," because they are achieved by surmounting all perceptions of material form, including the subtle form of the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*), which served as the object of the previous *jhānas*, and because they are the subjective correlates of the immaterial planes of existence.

Like the fine-material *jhānas*, the immaterial *jhānas* follow a fixed sequence and must be attained in the order in which they are presented. That is, the meditator who wishes to achieve the immaterial *jhānas* must begin with the sphere of boundless space and then proceed step by step up to the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. However, an important difference separates the modes of progress in the two cases. In the case of the fine-material *jhānas*, the ascent from one *jhāna* to another involves a

[888] *Vibhanga* 261.
[889] *Visuddhimagga* 167.
[890] *Visuddhimagga* 169.
[891] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 33.

surmounting of *jhāna* factors. To rise from the first *jhāna* to the second, the meditator must eliminate initial application (*vitakka*) and sustained application (*vicāra*), to rise from the second to the third, he must overcome rapture (*pīti*), and to rise from the third to the fourth, he must replace happiness (*sukha*) with equanimity (*upekkhā*). Thus, progress involves a reduction and refinement of the *jhāna* factors (*jhānanga*), from the initial five to the culmination in one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) and equanimity, or neutral feeling.

Once the fourth *jhāna* is reached, the *jhāna* factors remain constant, and, in higher ascent to the immaterial attainments, there is no further elimination of *jhāna* factors. For this reason, the formless *jhānas*, when classified from the perspective of their factorial constitution as is done in the *Abhidhamma*, are considered modes of the fourth fine-material *jhāna*. They are all two-factored *jhānas*, constituted by one-pointedness and equanimous feeling.

Rather than being determined by a surmounting of *factors*, the order of the immaterial *jhānas* is determined by a surmounting of *objects*. Whereas, for the lower *jhānas*, the object can remain constant but the factors must be changed, for the immaterial *jhānas*, the factors remain constant while the objects change. The sphere of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*) eliminates the *kasiṇa* object of the fourth fine-material *jhāna*, the sphere of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*) surmounts the object of the sphere of boundless space, the sphere of nothingness (*akincaññāyatana*) surmounts the object of the sphere of boundless consciousness, and the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception (*n'eva saññā-n'āsaññāyatana*) surmounts the object of the sphere of nothingness.

Because the objects become progressively more subtle at each level, the *jhāna* factors of equanimous feeling and one-pointedness, while remaining constant in nature throughout, become correspondingly more refined in quality. Buddhaghosa illustrates this with a simile of four pieces of cloth of the same measurements, spun by the same person, yet made of thick, thin, thinner and very thin thread respectively.[892] Also, whereas the four lower *jhānas* can each take a variety of objects — the ten *kasiṇas*, the in-and-out breath, etc. — and do not stand in any integral relation to these objects, the four immaterial *jhānas* each take a single object inseparably related to the attainment itself. The first is attained solely with the sphere of boundless space as object, the second with the sphere of boundless consciousness, and so forth.

The motivation which initially leads a meditator to seek the immaterial attainments is a clear recognition of the dangers inherent in material existence: it is by virtue of matter that injuries and death by weapons and knives occur, that one is afflicted with diseases, that one is subject to hunger and thirst, etc., while none of this takes place on the immaterial planes of existence.[893] Wishing to escape these dangers by taking rebirth in the immaterial planes, the meditator must first attain the four fine-material *jhānas* and master the fourth *jhāna* with any *kasiṇa* as object except the limited space *kasiṇa*. By this much, the meditator has risen above gross matter, but he still has not

[892] *Visuddhimagga* 339.
[893] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 410.

transcended the subtle material form comprised by the luminous counterpart sign which is the object of his *jhāna*. To reach the formless attainments. the meditator, after emerging from the fourth *jhāna*, must consider that even that *jhāna*, as refined as it is, still has an object consisting in material form and, thus, is distantly connected with gross matter; moreover, it is close to happiness, a factor of the third *jhāna*, and is far coarser than the immaterial states. The meditator sees the sphere of boundless space, the first immaterial *jhāna*, as more peaceful and sublime than the fourth fine-material *jhāna* and as more safely removed from materiality.

Following these preparatory reflections, the meditator enters the fourth *jhāna* based on a *kasiṇa* object and extends the counterpart sign of the *kasiṇa* "to the limit of the world-sphere, or as far as he likes." Then, after emerging from the fourth *jhāna*, he must remove the *kasiṇa* by attending exclusively to the space it has been made to cover without attending to the *kasiṇa* itself. Taking as his object the space left after the removal of the *kasiṇa*, the meditator adverts to it as "boundless space" or simply as "space, space," striking at it with initial and sustained application. As he cultivates this practice over and over, eventually, the consciousness pertaining to the sphere of boundless space arises with boundless space as its object.[894]

A meditator who has gained mastery over the sphere of boundless space, wishing to attain as well the second immaterial *jhāna*, must reflect upon the two defects of the first attainment, which are (1) its proximity to the fine-material *jhānas* and (2) its grossness compared to the sphere of boundless consciousness. Having in this way developed indifference to the lower attainment, he must next enter and emerge from the sphere of boundless space and then fix his attention upon the consciousness that occurred there pervading the boundless space. Since the space taken as the object by the first formless *jhāna* was boundless, the consciousness of that space also involves an aspect of boundlessness, and it is to this boundless consciousness that the aspirant adverts for the next attainment. He is not to attend to it merely as boundless, but as "boundless consciousness" or simply as "consciousness." He continues to cultivate this sign again and again until the consciousness belonging to the sphere of boundless consciousness arises in absorption, taking as its object the boundless consciousness pertaining to the first immaterial state.[895]

To attain the next formless state, the sphere of nothingness, the meditator who has mastered the sphere of boundless consciousness must contemplate its defects in the same twofold manner and advert to the superior peacefulness of the sphere of nothingness. Without giving any more attention to the sphere of boundless consciousness, he should "give attention to the present non-existence, voidness, secluded aspect of that same past consciousness belonging to the sphere consisting of boundless space."[896] In other words, the meditator should focus upon the present absence or non-existence of the consciousness belonging to the sphere of boundless space, adverting to it over and over thus: "There is nothing, there is nothing" or "void, void." When his efforts bear fruit,

[894] *Visuddhimagga* 327—328.
[895] *Visuddhimagga* 331—332.
[896] *Visuddhimagga* 333.

there arises in absorption a consciousness belonging to the sphere of nothingness, with the non-existence of the consciousness of boundless space as its object. Whereas the second immaterial state relates to the consciousness of boundless space positively, by focusing upon the content of that consciousness and appropriating its boundlessness, the third immaterial state relates to it negatively, by excluding that consciousness from awareness and making the absence or present non-existence of that consciousness its object.

The fourth and final immaterial *jhāna*, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, is reached through the same preliminary procedure. The meditator can also reflect upon the unsatisfactoriness of perception, thinking: "Perception is a disease, perception is a boil, perception is a dart... this is peaceful, this is sublime, that is to say, neither perception nor non-perception."[897] In this way, he ends his attachment to the sphere of nothingness and strengthens his resolve to attain the next higher stage. He then adverts to the four mental aggregates that constitute the attainment of the sphere of nothingness — its (1) feeling (*vedanā*); (2) perception (*saññā*); (3) mental formations (*saṁkhāra*); and (4) consciousness (*viññāṇa*) — contemplating them as "peaceful, peaceful," reviewing that base and striking at it with initial and sustained application. As he does so, the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are suppressed, and the mind passes through access concentration and enters the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception.

This *jhāna* receives its name because, on the one hand, it lacks gross perception with its function of clearly discerning objects, and, therefore, cannot be said to have perception; on the other, it retains a very subtle perception, and, therefore, cannot be said to be without perception. Because all the mental functions are here reduced to the finest and most subtle level, this *jhāna* is also named the "attainment with residual formations." At this level, the mind has reached the highest possible development in the direction of pure serenity. It has attained the most intense degree of concentration, becoming so refined that consciousness can no longer be described in terms of existence or non-existence. Yet even this attainment, from the Buddhist point of view, is still a mundane state that must finally give way to insight (*vipassanā*), which alone leads to complete, true, and final liberation (*vimokkha*).

The *Jhānas* and Rebirth

Buddhism teaches that all sentient beings in whom ignorance (*avijjā*) and craving (*taṇhā*) still linger are subject to rebirth following death. Their mode of rebirth is determined by their *kamma*, their volitional action, with wholesome *kamma* leading to a good rebirth and unwholesome *kamma* to a bad rebirth. As a kind of wholesome *kamma*, the attainment of *jhāna* can play a key role in the rebirth process, being considered a weighty good *kamma*, which takes precedence over other lesser *kammas* in determining the future rebirth of the person who attains it.

[897] *Majjhima Nikāya* II, 231.

Buddhist cosmology groups the numerous planes of existence into which rebirth takes place into three broad spheres, each of which comprises a number of subsidiary planes. The sense-sphere (*kāmadhātu*) is the field of rebirth for evil deeds and for meritorious deeds falling short of the *jhānas*; the fine-material sphere (*rūpadhātu*), the field of rebirth for the fine-material *jhānas*; and the immaterial sphere (*arūpadhātu*), the field of rebirth for the immaterial *jhānas*.

An unwholesome *kamma*, should it become determinative of rebirth, will lead to a new existence in one of the four planes of misery belonging to the sense-sphere: (1) the woeful realms; (2) the animal kingdom; (3) the sphere of "afflicted spirits" (*petas*); or (4) the host of "titans" (*asuras*). A wholesome *kamma* of a sub-jhānic type produces rebirth in one of the seven happy planes in the sense-sphere, the human world, or the six celestial worlds.

Above the sense-sphere realms are the fine-material realms, into which rebirth is gained only through the attainment of the fine-material *jhānas*. The sixteen realms in this sphere are hierarchically ordered in correlation with the four *jhānas*. Those who have practiced the first *jhāna* to a minor degree are reborn in the Realm of the Retinue of Brahmā; those who have practiced to a moderate degree, in the Realm of the Ministers of Brahmā; and those who have practiced to a superior degree, in the Realm of the Great Brahmā. Similarly, practicing the second *jhāna* to a minor degree brings rebirth in the Realm of Minor Luster; to a moderate degree, in the Realm of Infinite Luster; and, to a superior degree, the Realm of Radiant Luster. Again, practicing the third *jhāna* to a minor degree brings rebirth in the Realm of Minor Aura; to a moderate degree, in the Realm of Infinite Aura; and, to a superior degree, in the Realm of Steady Aura.

Corresponding to the fourth *jhāna*, there are seven realms: (1) the Realm of Great Reward; (2) the Realm of Non-percipient Beings; and (3—7) the five Pure Abodes. With this *jhāna*, the rebirth pattern deviates from the former one. It seems that all beings who practice the fourth *jhāna* of the mundane level, without reaching any supramundane attainment, are reborn in the Realm of Great Reward. There is no differentiation by way of inferior, moderate, or superior grades of development. The Realm of Non-percipient Beings is reached by those who, after attaining the fourth *jhāna*, then use the power of their meditation to take rebirth with only material bodies; they do not acquire consciousness again until they pass away from this realm. The five Pure Abodes are open only to Non-Returners (*Anāgāmīs*), noble disciples at the penultimate stage of liberation who have eradicated the fetters binding them to the sense-sphere and, from there, automatically take rebirth in higher realms, where they attain Arahatship and reach final deliverance.

Beyond the fine-material sphere lie the immaterial realms, which are four in number — (1) the sphere of boundless space; (2) the sphere of boundless consciousness; (3) the sphere of nothingness; and (4) the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception. As should be evident, these are realms of rebirth for those who, without having broken the fetters that bind them to *saṁsāra*, achieve and master one or another of the four immaterial *jhānas*. Those meditators who have mastery over a formless (*arūpa*) attainment at the time of death take rebirth in the appropriate plane, where they abide

until the karmic force of the *jhāna* is exhausted. Then, they pass away from there to take rebirth in some other realm, as determined by their accumulated *kamma*.

THE JHĀNAS AND THE SUPRAMUNDANE

The Way of Wisdom

The goal of the Buddhist path, complete and permanent liberation from suffering (*dukkha*), is to be achieved by practicing the full threefold discipline of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The mundane *jhānas*, comprising the four fine-material *jhānas* and the four immaterial *jhānas*, pertain to the concentration aspect, which they fulfill to an eminent degree. However, taken by themselves, these states do not ensure complete deliverance, for they are incapable of cutting off the roots of suffering. The *Buddha* teaches that the cause of suffering, the driving power behind the cycle of rebirths, is the defilements (*kilesa*), with their three unwholesome roots — greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). Concentration at the absorption level, no matter to what heights it is pursued, only temporarily suppresses the defilements, but it cannot destroy their latent seeds. Therefore, bare mundane *jhāna*, even when sustained, cannot, by itself, terminate the cycle of rebirths (*saṁsāra*). On the contrary, it may even perpetuate the round. For if any fine-material or immaterial *jhāna* is held to with clinging (*upādāna*), it will bring about a rebirth in that particular plane of existence corresponding to its own karmic potency, which can then be followed by rebirth in some lower realm.

What is required to achieve complete deliverance from the cycle of rebirths is the complete eradication of the defilements.[898] Since the most basic defilement is ignorance (*avijjā*), the key to liberation (*vimokkha*) lies in developing its direct opposite, namely, wisdom (*paññā*).

Since wisdom presupposes a certain proficiency in concentration, it is inevitable that *jhāna* comes to claim a place in its development. This place, however, is not fixed and invariable, but, as we shall see, allows for differences depending on the individual meditator's disposition.

Fundamental to the discussion in this section is a distinction between two terms crucial to Theravādin philosophical exposition, "mundane" (*lokiya*) and "supramundane" (*lokuttara*). The term "mundane" applies to all phenomena comprised in the world (*loka*) — to subtle states of consciousness as well as to matter, to virtue as well as to evil, to meditative attainments as well as to sensory engrossments. The term "supramundane," in

[898] The "defilements" (*kilesa*) are mind-defiling, unwholesome qualities. There are ten defilements, so called because they themselves are defiled and because they defile the mental factors associated with them; they are: (1) greed (*lobha*); (2) hatred (*dosa*); (3) delusion (*moha*); (4) conceit (*māna*); (5) speculative views (*diṭṭhi*); (6) skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*); (7) mental torpor (*thīna*); (8) restlessness (*uddhacca*); (9) shamelessness (*ahirika*); and (10) lack of moral dread, or unconscientiousness (*anottappa*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 103.

contrast, applies exclusively to that which transcends the world, that is, the nine supramundane states: *nibbāna*, the four noble paths (*magga*) leading to *nibbāna*, and their corresponding fruits (*phala*), which experience the bliss of *nibbāna*.

Wisdom has the specific characteristic of penetrating the true nature of mental and physical phenomena. It penetrates the particular and general features of things through direct personal experience of their characteristics rather than through discursive thought. Its function is "to abolish the darkness of delusion which conceals the individual essences of states," and its manifestation is "non-delusion." Since the *Buddha* says that one whose mind is concentrated knows and sees things as they are, the proximate cause of wisdom is concentration.[899]

The wisdom instrumental in attaining liberation is divided into two principal types: (1) insight knowledge (*vipassanāñāṇa*) and (2) the knowledge pertaining to the supramundane paths (*maggañāṇa*). The first is the direct penetration of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena — impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*). It takes as its objective sphere the five aggregates of clinging (*pañcakkhandha*) — (1) material form (*rūpa*); (2) feeling (*vedanā*); (3) perception (*saññā*); (4) mental formations (*saṁkhāra*); and (5) consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Because insight knowledge takes the world of conditioned formations as its object, it is regarded as a mundane form of wisdom. Insight knowledge does not itself directly eradicate the defilements, but serves to prepare the way for the second type of wisdom, the wisdom of the supramundane paths, which emerges when insight has been brought to its climax. The wisdom of the path, occurring in four distinct stages (to be discussed below), simultaneously realizes *nibbāna*, understands the Four Noble Truths, and cuts off the defilements. This wisdom is called "supramundane" (*lokuttara*) because it rises up from the world of the five aggregates to realize the state transcendent to the world, *nibbāna*.

The Buddhist disciple, striving for deliverance, begins the development of wisdom by first securely establishing its roots — purified moral discipline (*sīla*) and concentration (*samādhi*). He then learns and masters the basic material upon which wisdom (*paññā*) is to work — the aggregates, elements, sense bases, dependent arising, the Four Noble Truths, etc. He commences the actual practice of wisdom by cultivating insight into the impermanence, suffering, and non-self aspect of the five aggregates. When this insight reaches its apex, it culminates in supramundane wisdom, the right view factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, which turns from conditioned formations to the unconditioned *nibbāna* and, thereby, eradicates the defilements.

The Two Vehicles

The Theravādin tradition recognizes two alternative approaches to the development of wisdom, between which practitioners are free to choose according to their aptitude and propensity. These two approaches are the vehicle of serenity

[899] *Visuddhimagga* 438.

(*samathayāna*) and the vehicle of insight (*vipassanāyāna*). The meditators who follow them are called, respectively, the *samathayānika,* "one who makes serenity his vehicle," and the *vipassanāyānika,* "one who makes insight his vehicle." Since both vehicles, despite their names, are approaches to developing insight, to prevent misunderstanding, the latter type of meditator is sometimes called a *suddhavipassanāyānika,* "one who makes bare insight his vehicle," or a *sukkhavipassaka,* "a dry-insight worker." Though all three terms appear initially in the Commentaries rather than in the *suttas*, the recognition of the two vehicles seems implicit in a number of canonical passages.

The *samathayānika* is a meditator who first attains access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) or one of the eight mundane *jhānas*, then emerges and uses his attainment as a basis for cultivating insight until he arrives at the supramundane path. In contrast, the *vipassanāyānika* does not attain mundane *jhāna* prior to practicing insight contemplation, or, if he does, does not use it as an instrument for cultivating insight. Instead, without entering and emerging from *jhāna*, he proceeds directly to insight contemplation on mental and material phenomena and, by means of this bare insight, he reaches the noble path. For both kinds of meditator, the experience of the path in any of its four stages always occurs at a level of jhānic intensity and, thus, necessarily includes supramundane *jhāna* under the heading of right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), the eighth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path.

The classical source for the distinction between the two vehicles of serenity and insight is the *Visuddhimagga*, where it is explained that, when a meditator begins the development of wisdom, "if, firstly, his vehicle is serenity, [he] should emerge from any fine-material or immaterial *jhāna* except the sphere consisting of neither perception nor non-perception, and he should discern, according to characteristic, function, and so forth, the *jhāna* factors consisting of initial application, and so forth, and the states associated with them."[900] Other commentarial passages allow access concentration to suffice for the vehicle of serenity, but the last immaterial *jhāna* is excluded, because its factors are too subtle to be discerned. The meditator whose vehicle is pure insight, on the other hand, is advised to start directly by discerning material and mental phenomena, beginning with the four elements, without utilizing a *jhāna* for this purpose.[901] Thus, the *samathayānika* first attains access concentration, or mundane (*lokiya*) *jhāna*, and then develops insight knowledge (*vipassanā*), by means of which he reaches the supramundane path containing wisdom, under the heading of "right view," and supramundane *jhāna*, under the heading of "right concentration." The *vipassanāyānika,* in contrast, skips over mundane *jhāna* and goes directly into insight contemplation. When he reaches the end of the progression of insight knowledge, he arrives at the supramundane path which, as in the previous case, brings together wisdom with supramundane *jhāna*. This supramundane *jhāna* counts as his accomplishment of serenity.

For a meditator following the vehicle of serenity, the attainment of *jhāna* fulfills two functions: first, it produces a basis of mental purity and inner collectedness needed

[900] *Visuddhimagga* 557.
[901] *Visuddhimagga* 558.

for undertaking the work of insight contemplation; and second, it serves as an object to be examined with insight in order to discern the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. *Jhāna* accomplishes the first function by providing a powerful instrument for overcoming the five hindrances. As we have seen, for wisdom to arise, the mind must first be well-concentrated, and to be well-concentrated, it must be freed from the hindrances, a task accomplished pre-eminently by the attainment of *jhāna*. Though access concentration will keep the hindrances at bay, *jhāna* will ensure that they are removed to a much safer distance.

In their capacity for producing concentration, the *jhānas* are called the "basis" (*pāda*) for insight, and that particular *jhāna* a meditator enters and emerges from before commencing his practice of insight is designated his "*pādakajjhāna*," the "basic" or "foundational" *jhāna*. Insight cannot be practiced while absorbed in *jhāna*, since insight meditation requires investigation and observation, which are impossible when the mind is immersed in one-pointed absorption. But, after emerging from the *jhāna*, the mind is cleared of the hindrances, and the stillness and clarity that then result lead to precise, penetrating insight.

The *jhānas* also enter into the *samathayānika's* practice in a second capacity, that is, as objects for scrutiny by insight. The practice of insight consists essentially in the examination of mental and physical phenomena to discover their characteristics of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. The *jhānas* a meditator attains provide him with a readily available and strikingly clear object in which to seek out these three characteristics. After emerging from a *jhāna*, the meditator will proceed to examine the jhānic consciousness and to discern the way in which it exemplifies the three universal characteristics. This process is called *sammasanañāṇa,* "comprehension knowledge," and the *jhāna* subject to such treatment is termed *sammasitajjhāna*, "the comprehended *jhāna*."[902] Though the basic *jhāna* and the comprehended *jhāna* will often be the same, the two do not necessarily coincide. A meditator cannot practice comprehension on a *jhāna* higher than he is capable of attaining, but one who uses a higher *jhāna* as his *pādakajjhāna* can still practice insight comprehension on a lower *jhāna* which he has previously attained and mastered. The admitted difference between the *pādakajjhāna* and the *sammasitajjhāna* leads to divergent theories about the supramundane concentration of the noble path, as we shall see.

Whereas the sequence of training undertaken by the *samathayānika* meditator is unproblematic, the *vipassanāyānika's* approach presents the difficulty of accounting for the concentration he uses to provide a basis for insight. Concentration is needed in order to see and know things as they are, but without access concentration or *jhāna*, what concentration can he use? The answer to this question is found in a type of concentration distinct from the access (*upacāra*) and absorption (*appanā*) concentrations pertaining to the vehicle of serenity, called "momentary concentration" (*khaṇika samādhi*). Despite its name, momentary concentration does not signify a single moment of concentration amidst a current of distracted thoughts, but a dynamic concentration which flows from

[902] *Visuddhimagga* 607—611.

object to object in the ever-changing flux of phenomena, retaining a constant degree of intensity and collectedness sufficient to purify the mind of the hindrances. Momentary concentration arises in the *samathayānika* simultaneously with his post-jhānic attainment of insight, but, for the *vipassanāyānika*, it develops naturally and spontaneously in the course of his insight practice without his having to fix the mind upon a single exclusive object. Thus, the follower of the vehicle of insight does not omit concentration altogether from his training, but develops it in a different manner from the practitioner of serenity. Without having gained *jhāna*, he goes directly into the contemplation on the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*) and, by observing them constantly from moment to moment, acquires momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*) as an accompaniment of his investigations. This momentary concentration fulfills the same function as the basic *jhāna* of the serenity vehicle, providing the foundation of mental clarity needed for insight to emerge.

Supramundane *Jhāna*

The climax in the development of insight is the attainment of the supramundane paths (*magga*) and fruits (*phala*). Each path is a momentary peak experience directly apprehending *nibbāna* and permanently cutting off certain defilements. These defilements are generally grouped into a set of ten "fetters" (*saṁyojana*), which keep beings chained to the round of rebirths. The first path, called the "path of Stream-Entry" (*Sotāpatti*) because it marks the entry into the stream of the *Dhamma*, eradicates the first three fetters — (1) the false view of self; (2) skeptical doubt; and (3) clinging to rites and rituals. The disciple who has reached Stream-Entry has limited his future births to a maximum of seven in the happy realms of the human and celestial worlds, after which he will attain final deliverance. But an ardent disciple may progress to still higher stages in the same life in which he reaches Stream-Entry, by making an aspiration for the next higher path and again undertaking the development of insight with the aim of reaching that path.

The next supramundane path is that of the Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmī*). This path does not eradicate any fetters completely, but it greatly weakens the next two — (4) sense desire and (5) ill will. The Once-Returner is so called because he is bound to make an end of suffering after returning to this world only one more time. The third path, that of the Non-Returner (*Anāgāmī*), utterly destroys the sense desire and ill will weakened by the preceding path. The Non-Returner is assured that he will never again take rebirth in the sense-sphere; if he does not penetrate higher, he will be reborn spontaneously in the Pure Abodes and there reach final *nibbāna*. The highest path, the path of Arahatship, eradicates the remaining five fetters — (6) desire for existence in the fine-material sphere; (7) desire for existence in the immaterial sphere; (8) conceit; (9) restlessness; and (10) ignorance. The *Arahat* has completed the development of the entire path taught by the *Buddha*; he has reached the end of rebirths and can sound his "lion's roar":

"Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what was to be done has been done, there is nothing further beyond this."

Each path is followed immediately by the supramundane experience of fruition (*phala*), which results from the path, comes in the same four graded stages, and shares the path's world-transcending character. But, whereas the path performs the active function of cutting off defilements, fruition simply enjoys the bliss and peace that result when the path has completed its task. Also, whereas the path is limited to a single moment of consciousness, the fruition that follows immediately upon the path endures for two or three moments. And, while each of the four paths occurs only once and can never be repeated, fruition remains accessible to the noble disciple at the appropriate level. He can resort to it as a special meditative state called "fruition attainment" (*phalasamāpatti*) for the purpose of experiencing nibbānic bliss here and now.[903]

The supramundane paths and fruits always arise as states of jhānic consciousness. They occur as states of *jhāna* because they contain within themselves the *jhāna* factors elevated to an intensity corresponding to that of the *jhāna* factors in the mundane *jhānas*. Since they possess the *jhāna* factors, these states are able to fix upon their object with the force of full absorption. Thence, taking the absorptive force of the *jhāna* factors as the criterion, the paths and fruits may be reckoned as belonging to either the first, second, third, or fourth *jhāna* of the fourfold scheme, or to the first, second, third, fourth, or fifth *jhāna* of the fivefold scheme.

The basis for the recognition of a supramundane type of *jhāna* goes back to the *suttas*, especially to the section of "The Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness," where the *Buddha* defines right concentration of the Noble Eightfold Path by the standard formula for the four *jhānas*.[904] However, it is in the *Abhidhamma* that the connection between the *jhānas*, paths, and fruits comes to be worked out with great intricacy of detail. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, in its section on states of consciousness, expounds each of the path and fruition states of consciousness as occasions, first, of one or another of the four *jhānas* in the fourfold scheme, and, then again, as occasions of one or another of the five *jhānas* in the fivefold scheme.[905] Standard Abhidhammic exposition, as formalized in the synoptical manuals of *Abhidhamma*, employs the fivefold scheme and brings each of the paths and fruits into connection with each of the five *jhānas*. In this way, the eight types of supramundane consciousness — the path and fruition consciousness of Stream-Entry, Once-Return, Non-Return, and Arahatship — proliferate to forty types of supramundane consciousness, since any path or fruit can occur at the level of any of the five *jhānas*. It should be noted, however, that there are no paths and fruits conjoined with the immaterial (*arūpa*) attainments, the reason being that supramundane *jhāna* is presented solely from the standpoint of its factorial constitution, which, for the immaterial attainment and the fifth *jhāna*, is identical — equanimity (*upekkhā*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

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[903] *Visuddhimagga* 699—702.
[904] *Dīgha Nikāya* II, 313.
[905] *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 74—86.

The fullest treatment of the supramundane *jhānas* in the authoritative Pāḷi literature can be found in the *Dhammasaṅgaṇī*, read in conjunction with its Commentary, the *Atthasālinī.* The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* opens its analysis of the first wholesome supramundane consciousness with the words:

> *On the occasion when one develops supramundane jhāna, which is emancipating, leading to the demolition (of existence), for the abandonment of views, for reaching the first plane, secluded from sense pleasures... one enters and dwells in the first jhāna.*[906]

The *Atthasālinī* explains the word *lokuttara*, which we have been translating "supramundane," as meaning "it crosses over the world, it transcends the world, it stands having surmounted and overcome the world." It glosses the phrase "one develops *jhāna*" thus: "One develops, produces, cultivates absorption *jhāna* lasting for a single thought-moment." This gloss shows us two things about the consciousness of the path: (1) that it occurs as a *jhāna* at the level of full absorption and (2) that this absorption of the path lasts for only a single thought-moment (*cittakkhaṇa*). The word "emancipating" (*niyyānika*) is explained to mean that this *jhāna* "goes out" from the world, from the round of existence, the phrase "leading to demolition" (*apacayagāmi*) that it demolishes and dismantles the process of rebirth.[907]

This last phrase points to a striking difference between mundane and supramundane *jhāna*. The *Dhammasaṅgaṇī's* exposition of the former begins: "On the occasion when one develops *the path for rebirth in the fine-material sphere*... one enters and dwells in the first *jhāna*" [my italics]. Thus, with this statement, mundane *jhāna* is shown to sustain the round of rebirths; it is a wholesome *kamma*, leading to renewed existence. But the supramundane *jhāna* of the path does not promote the continuation of the round of rebirths. On the contrary, it brings about the round's dismantling and demolition, as the *Atthasālinī* shows with an illustrative simile:

> *The wholesome states of the three planes are said to lead to accumulation, because they build up and increase death and rebirth in the round. But not this. Just as, when one man has built up a wall eighteen feet high, another might take a club and go along demolishing it, so, this goes along demolishing and dismantling the deaths and rebirths built up by the wholesome kammas of the three planes by bringing about a deficiency in their conditions. Thus, it leads to demolition.*

Supramundane *jhāna* is said to be cultivated "for the abandoning of views." This phrase points to the function of the first path, which is to eradicate the fetters. The supramundane *jhāna* of the first path cuts off the fetter of personality view and all speculative views derived from it. The *Atthasālinī* points out that, here, we should

[906] *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 72.
[907] *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 259.

understand that it abandons not only wrong views but other unwholesome states as well, namely, doubt, clinging to rites and rituals, and greed, hatred, and delusion strong enough to lead to the plane of misery. The Commentary explains "for reaching the first plane" as meaning for attaining the fruit of Stream-Entry.

Besides these, several other differences between mundane and supramundane *jhāna* may be briefly noted. First, with regard to their object, the mundane *jhānas* have as object a conceptual entity such as the counterpart sign (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*) of the *kasiṇas* or, in the case of the divine abodes, sentient beings. In contrast, for the supramundane *jhāna* of the paths and fruits, the object is exclusively *nibbāna*. With regard to their predominant tone, in mundane *jhāna*, the element of serenity prevails, while the supramundane *jhāna* of the paths and fruits brings serenity and insight into balance. Wisdom is present as right view and serenity as right concentration, both functioning together in perfect harmony, neither one exceeding the other.

This difference in prevailing tone leads into a difference in function or activity between the two kinds of *jhāna*. Both the mundane and supramundane are *jhānas* in the sense of closely attending (*upanijjhāna*), but, in the case of mundane *jhāna*, this close attention leads merely to absorption into the object, an absorption that can only suppress the defilements temporarily. In the supramundane *jhāna*, particularly of the four paths, the coupling of close attention with wisdom brings the exercise of four functions at a single moment. These four functions each apply to one of the Four Noble Truths. The path penetrates the First Noble Truth by fully *understanding* suffering; it penetrates the Second Noble Truth by *abandoning* craving, the origin of suffering; it penetrates the Third Noble Truth by *realizing nibbāna*, the cessation of suffering; and it penetrates the Fourth Noble Truth by *developing* the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to the end of suffering. Buddhaghosa illustrates this with the simile of a lamp, which also performs four tasks simultaneously: it burns the wick, dispels darkness, makes light appear, and consumes oil.[908]

The Jhānic Level of the Path and Fruit

When the paths and fruits are assigned to the level of the four or five *jhānas*, the question arises as to what factor determines their particular level of jhānic intensity. In other words, why do the path and fruit arise for one meditator at the level of the first *jhāna*, for another at the level of the second *jhāna*, and so forth? The Commentaries present three theories concerning the determination of the jhānic level of the path, apparently deriving from the lineages of ancient teachers.[909] The first holds that it is the basic *jhāna*, that is, the *jhāna* used as a basis for the insight leading to emergence in immediate proximity to the path that governs the difference in the jhānic level of the path. A second theory says that the difference is governed by the aggregates made the objects

[908] *Visuddhimagga* 690.
[909] *Visuddhimagga* 666—667; *Atthasālinī* 271—274.

of insight on the occasion of insight leading to emergence. A third theory holds that it is the personal inclination of the meditator that governs the difference.

According to the first theory, the path arisen in a dry-insight meditator who lacks *jhāna*, and the path arisen in one who possesses a *jhāna* attainment but does not use it as a basis for insight, and the path arisen by comprehending formations after emerging from the first *jhāna*, are all paths of the first *jhāna* only. When the path is produced after emerging from the second, third, fourth, and fifth *jhānas* (of the fivefold system) and using these as the basis for insight, then, the path pertains to the level of the *jhāna* used as a basis — the second, third, fourth, or fifth. For a meditator using an immaterial *jhāna* as the basis, the path will be a fifth *jhāna* path. Thus, according to this first theory, when formations are comprehended by insight after emerging from a basic *jhāna*, then, it is the *jhāna* attainment emerged from at the point nearest to the path, that is, just before insight leading to emergence is reached, that makes the path similar in nature to itself.

According to the second theory, the path that arises is similar in nature to the states that are being comprehended with insight at the time insight leading to emergence occurs. Therefore, if the meditator, after emerging from a meditative attainment, is comprehending with insight sense-sphere phenomena or the constituents of the first *jhāna*, then, the path produced will occur at the level of the first *jhāna*. In keeping with this theory, then, it is the comprehended *jhāna* (*sammasitajjhāna*) that determines the jhānic quality of the path. The one qualification that must be added is that a meditator cannot contemplate with insight a *jhāna* higher than he is capable of attaining.

According to the third theory, the path occurs at the level of whichever *jhāna* the meditator wishes — either at the level of the *jhāna* he has used as the basis for insight or at the level of the *jhāna* he has made the object of insight comprehension. In other words, the jhānic quality of the path accords with his personal inclination. However, mere wish alone is not sufficient. For the path to occur at the jhānic level wished for, the mundane *jhāna* must have been either made the basis for insight or used as the object of insight comprehension.

The difference between the three theories can be understood through a simple example.[910] If a meditator reaches the supramundane path by contemplating with insight the first *jhāna* after emerging from the fifth *jhāna*, then, according to the first theory, his path will belong to the fifth *jhāna*, while, according to the second theory, it will belong to the first *jhāna*. Thus, these two theories are incompatible when a difference obtains between basic *jhāna* and comprehended *jhāna*. But according to the third theory, the path becomes whichever *jhāna* the meditator wishes, either the first or the fifth. Thus, this doctrine does not necessarily clash with the other two.

Buddhaghosa himself does not make a decision among these three theories. He only points out that, in all three doctrines, beneath their disagreements, there is the recognition that the insight immediately preceding the supramundane path determines the jhānic character of the path. For this insight is the proximate and the principal cause for the arising of the path, so, whether it be the insight leading to emergence near the basic

[910] *Atthasālinī* 274.

jhāna or that occurring through the contemplated *jhāna* or that fixed by the meditator's wish, it is, in all cases, this final phase of insight that gives definition to the supramundane path. Since the fruition that occurs immediately after the path has an identical constitution to the path, its own supramundane *jhāna* is determined by the path. Thus, a first *jhāna* path produces a first *jhāna* fruit, and so forth for the remaining *jhānas*.

JHĀNA AND THE NOBLE DISCIPLES

Jhānic Attainment

All Noble Ones, as we saw, acquire supramundane *jhāna* along with their attainment of the noble paths and fruits. The Noble Ones, at each of the four stages of liberation, moreover, have access to the supramundane *jhāna* of their respective fruition attainments, from the fruition attainment of Stream-Entry up to the fruition attainments of Arahatship. It remains problematic, however, to what extent they also enjoy the possession of mundane *jhāna*. To determine an answer to this question, we will consult an early typology of seven types of noble disciples, which provides a more psychologically oriented way of classifying the eight noble individuals. A look at the explanation of these seven types will enable us to see the range of jhānic attainment reached by the noble disciples. On this basis, we will proceed to assess the place of mundane *jhāna* in the early Buddhist view of the *Arahat*, the fully-perfected individual.

Seven Types of Noble Disciples

The sevenfold typology is originally found in the Kiṭāgiri Sutta of the *Majjhima Nikāya*[911] and is reformulated in the *Puggalapaññatti* of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*. This typology classifies the noble persons on the paths and fruits into seven types: (1) the faith-devotee (*saddhānusāri*); (2) the one liberated by faith (*saddhāvimutta*); (3) the body-witness (*kāyasakkhi*); (4) the one liberated in both ways (*ubhatobhāgavimutta*); (5) the truth-devotee (*dhammānusāri*); (6) the one attained to understanding (*diṭṭhipatta*); and (7) the one liberated by wisdom (*paññāvimutta*). The seven types may be divided into three general groups, each defined by the predominance of a particular spiritual faculty. The first two types are governed by a predominance of faith (*saddhā*), the middle two by a predominance of concentration (*samādhi*), and the last three by a predominance of wisdom (*paññā*). However, certain qualifications will have to be made to this threefold division as we go along.

(1) The *faith-devotee* is explained in the *sutta* thus:

[911] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 477—479.

> *"Herein, Monks, some person has not reached with his own [mental] body those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form; nor, after seeing with wisdom, have his cankers*[912] *been destroyed. But, he has a certain degree of faith in the Tathāgata, a certain degree of devotion to him, and he has these qualities — the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. This person, Monks, is called a 'faith-devotee'."*[913]

The *Puggalapaññatti* defines the faith-devotee from a different angle, as a disciple practicing for the fruit of Stream-Entry in whom the faculty of faith is predominant and who develops the noble path led by faith. It adds that, when he is established in the fruit, he becomes one liberated by faith. Although the *sutta* excluded the "peaceful immaterial attainments," that is, the four immaterial *jhānas*, from the faith-devotee's equipment, this implies nothing with regard to his achievement of the four lower mundane *jhānas*. It would seem that the faith-devotee can have previously attained any of the four fine-material *jhānas* before reaching the path, and can also be a dry-insight worker bereft of mundane *jhāna*.

(2) The one liberated by faith is strictly and literally defined as a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels, from the fruit of Stream-Entry through to the path of Arahatship, who lacks the immaterial *jhānas* and has a predominance of the faith faculty.

The *Buddha* explains the one liberated by faith as follows:

> *"Herein, Monks, some person has not reached, with his own [mental] body, those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form; but, having seen with wisdom, some of his cankers have been destroyed, and his faith in the Tathāgata is settled, deeply rooted, well established. This person, Monks, is called 'one liberated by faith'."*[914]

As in the case of the faith-devotee, the one liberated by faith, while lacking the immaterial *jhānas*, may still be an obtainer of the four mundane *jhānas* as well as a dry-insight worker.

The *Puggalapaññatti* states that the person liberated by faith is one who understands the Four Noble Truths, has seen and verified by means of wisdom the teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata, and, having seen with wisdom, has eliminated some of his cankers (*āsava*). However, he has not done so as easily as the *diṭṭhipatta,* the person attained to understanding, whose progress is easier due to his superior wisdom.

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[912] The "cankers", or "taints" (*āsava*), are four powerful defilements that sustain *saṁsāra*: (1) desire for gratification of the senses (sense desire) (*kāmāsava*); (2) desire for (eternal) existence (*bhavāsava*); (3) wrong views (*diṭṭhāsava*); and (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 27—28.

[913] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 479.

[914] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 478.

The fact that the one liberated by faith has destroyed only some of his cankers implies that he has advanced beyond the first path but not yet reached the final fruit, the fruit of Arahatship.[915]

(3) The body-witness is a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels, from the fruit of Stream-Entry to the path of Arahatship, who has a predominance of the faculty of concentration and can obtain the immaterial *jhānas*. The *sutta* explanation reads:

> *"And what person, Monks, is a body-witness? Herein, Monks, some person has reached, with his own [mental] body, those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form, and, having seen with wisdom, some of his cankers have been destroyed. This person, Monks, is called a 'body-witness'."*[916]

The *Puggalapaññatti* offers a slight variation in this phrasing, substituting "the eight deliverances" (*aṭṭhavimokkhā*) for the *sutta's* "peaceful immaterial deliverances" (*santā vimokkhā āruppā*). These eight deliverances consist of three meditative attainments pertaining to the fine-material sphere (inclusive of all four lower *jhānas*), the four immaterial *jhānas*, and the cessation of perception and feeling (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*) — the last a special attainment accessible only to those Non-Returners and *Arahats* who have also mastered the eight *jhānas*.[917] The statement in the *Puggalapaññatti* does not mean either that the achievement of all eight deliverances is necessary to become a body-witness or that the achievement of the three lower deliverances is sufficient. What is both requisite and sufficient to qualify as a body-witness is the partial destruction of defilements coupled with the attainment of at least the lowest immaterial *jhāna*. Thus, the body witness becomes fivefold by way of those who obtain any of the four immaterial *jhānas* and the one who also obtains the cessation of perception and feeling.

(4) One who is liberated in both ways is an *Arahat* who has completely destroyed the defilements and possesses the immaterial attainments. The Commentaries explain the name "liberated in both ways" as meaning "through the immaterial attainment, he is liberated from the material body and through the path [of Arahatship], he is liberated from the mental body."[918] The *sutta* defines this type of disciple thus:

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[915] According to the *Visuddhimagga* (659), however, *Arahats* in whom faith is predominant can also be called "liberated by faith." Its Commentary points out that this statement is intended only figuratively, in the sense that those *Arahats* reach their goal after having been liberated by faith in the intermediate stages.

[916] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 478.

[917] The first three emancipations are: (1) one possessing material forms sees material forms; (2) one not perceiving material forms internally sees material forms externally; and (3) one is released upon the idea of the beautiful. They are understood to be variations on the *jhānas* attained with color *kasiṇas*. The attainment of cessation (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*) is also called the "attainment of extinction" (*nirodha-samāpatti*). It is discussed in the *Visuddhimagga* (XXIII).

[918] *Majjhima Nikāya* II, 131.

> *"And what person, Monks, is liberated in both ways? Herein, Monks, someone has reached, with his own [mental] body, those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form, and, having seen with wisdom, his cankers are destroyed. This person, Monks, is called 'liberated in both ways'."*[919]

The *Puggalapaññatti* gives basically the same formula but replaces "immaterial deliverances" with "the eight deliverances." The same principle of interpretation that applied to the body-witness applies here: the attainment of any immaterial *jhāna*, even the lowest, is sufficient to qualify a person as liberated in both ways. As the Commentary to the *Visuddhimagga* says: "One who has attained Arahatship after gaining even one [immaterial *jhāna*] is liberated in both ways."[920] This type becomes fivefold by way of those who attain Arahatship after emerging from one or another of the four immaterial *jhānas* and the one who attains Arahatship after emerging from the attainment of cessation.[921]

(5) The truth-devotee is a disciple on the first path in whom the faculty of wisdom is predominant. The *Buddha* explains the truth-devotee as follows:

> *"Herein, Monks, some person has not reached, with his own [mental] body, those peaceful immaterial deliverances transcending material form; nor, after seeing with wisdom, have his cankers been destroyed. But, the teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata are accepted by him through mere reflection, and he has these qualities — the faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. This person, Monks, is called a 'truth-devotee'."*[922]

The *Puggalapaññatti* defines the truth-devotee as one practicing for realization of the fruit of Stream-Entry in whom the faculty of wisdom is predominant, and who develops the path led by wisdom. It adds that, when a truth-devotee is established in the fruit of Stream-Entry, he becomes one attained to understanding, the sixth type. The *sutta* and *Abhidhamma* again differ as to emphasis, the one stressing lack of the immaterial *jhānas*, the other the noble stature. Presumably, he may have any of the four fine-material *jhānas* or be a bare-insight practitioner without any mundane *jhāna*.

(6) The one attained to understanding is a noble disciple at the six intermediate levels who lacks the immaterial *jhānas* and has a predominance of the wisdom faculty. The *Buddha* explains:

> *"And what person, Monks, is the one attained to understanding? Herein, Monks, someone has not reached, with his own [mental] body, those peaceful*

[919] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 477.
[920] *Visuddhimagga* Commentary II, 466.
[921] *Majjhima Nikāya* III, 131.
[922] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 479.

> *immaterial deliverances transcending material form, but, having seen with wisdom, some of his cankers are destroyed, and the teachings proclaimed by the Tathāgata have been seen and verified by him with wisdom. This person, Monks, is called the 'one attained to understanding'."*[923]

The *Puggalapaññatti* defines the one attained to understanding as a person who understands the Four Noble Truths, has seen and verified, by means of wisdom, the teachings proclaimed by the *Tathāgata*, and, having seen with wisdom, has eliminated some of his cankers. Therefore, he is the "wisdom counterpart" of the one liberated by faith, but progresses more easily than the latter by virtue of his sharper wisdom. Like his counterpart, he may possess any of the four mundane *jhānas* or may be a dry-insight worker.

(7) The one liberated by wisdom is an *Arahat* who does not obtain the immaterial attainments. In the words of the *sutta*:

> *"And what person, Monks, is the one liberated by wisdom? Herein, Monks, someone has not reached, with his own [mental] body, those peaceful material deliverances transcending material form, but, having seen with wisdom, his cankers are destroyed. This person, Monks, is called one 'liberated by wisdom'."*[924]

The definition given in the *Puggalapaññatti* merely replaces "immaterial deliverance" with "the eight deliverances." Though such *Arahats* do not reach the immaterial *jhānas*, it is quite possible for them to attain the lower *jhānas*. The *sutta* Commentary in fact states that the one liberated by wisdom is fivefold by way of the dry-insight worker and the four who attain Arahatship after emerging from the four form, or fine-material, *jhānas*.

It should be noted that the one liberated by wisdom is contrasted not with the one liberated by faith, but with the one liberated in both ways. The issue that divides the two types of *Arahat* is the lack of or possession of the four immaterial *jhānas* and the attainment of cessation. The person liberated by faith is found at the six intermediate levels of holiness, not at the level of Arahatship. When he obtains Arahatship, lacking the immaterial *jhānas*, he becomes one liberated by wisdom even though faith rather that wisdom is his predominant faculty. Similarly, a meditator with a predominance of concentration who possesses the immaterial attainments will still be liberated in both ways even if wisdom rather than concentration claims first place among his spiritual endowments, as was the case with Venerable Sāriputta.

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[923] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 478.
[924] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 477—478.

Jhāna and the *Arahat*

From the standpoint of their spiritual stature, the seven types of noble persons can be divided into three categories. The first, which includes the faith-devotee and the truth-devotee, consists of those on the path of Stream-Entry, the first of the eight noble individuals. The second category, comprising the one liberated by faith, the body-witness, and the one attained to understanding, consists of those on the six intermediate levels, from the Stream-Enterer to one on the path of Arahatship. The third category, comprising the one liberated in both ways and the one liberated by wisdom, consists only of *Arahats*.[925]

The *ubhatobhāgavimutta,* "one liberated in both ways," and the *paññāvimutta* "one liberated by wisdom," thus form the terms of a twofold typology of *Arahats* distinguished on the basis of their accomplishment in *jhāna*. The *ubhatobhāgavimutta Arahat* experiences, in his own person, the "peaceful deliverances" of the immaterial sphere, while the *paññāvimutta Arahat* lacks this full experience of the immaterial *jhānas*. Each of these two types, according to the Commentaries, again becomes fivefold — the *ubhatobhāgavimutta* by way of those who possess the ascending four immaterial *jhānas* and the attainment of cessation, the *paññāvimutta* by way of those who reach Arahatship after emerging from one of the four fine-material *jhānas* and the dry-insight meditator whose insight lacks the support of mundane *jhāna*.

The possibility of attaining the supramundane path without possession of a mundane *jhāna* has been questioned by some Theravādin scholars, but the *Visuddhi-magga* clearly admits this possibility when it distinguishes between the path arisen in a dry-insight meditator and the path arisen in one who possesses a *jhāna* but does not use it as a basis for insight.[926] Textual verification that there can be *Arahats* lacking mundane *jhāna* is found in the Susima Sutta,[927] together with is Commentaries. When the Monks in the *sutta* are asked how they can be *Arahats* without possessing supernormal powers of the immaterial attainments, they reply: "We are liberated by wisdom" (*paññāvimuttā kho mayaṁ*). The Commentary glosses this reply thus: "We are contemplatives, dry-insight meditators, liberated by wisdom alone" (*Mayaṁ nijjhānakā sukkhavipassakā paññā-matten'eva vimuttā ti*).[928] The Commentary also states that the *Buddha* gave His long lecture on insight in the *sutta* "to show the arising of knowledge even without concentration" (*vinā pi samādhiṁ evam ñāṇuppattidassanatthaṁ*).[929] The Sub-Commentary establishes the point by explaining "even without concentration" to mean "even without concentration previously accomplished reaching the mark of serenity"

[925] It should be noted that the Kīṭāgiri Sutta makes no provision in its typology for a disciple on the first path who gains the immaterial *jhānas*. According to the *Visuddhimagga* Commentary (II, 466), he would have to be considered either a faith-devotee or a truth-devotee, and, at the final fruition, would be one liberated in both ways.
[926] *Visuddhimagga* 666—667.
[927] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* II, 199—123.
[928] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* II, 117.
[929] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* II, 117.

(*samathalakkhaṇappattaṁ purimasiddhaṁvinā pi samādhin ti*), adding that this is said in reference to one who makes insight his vehicle.[930]

In contrast to the *paññāvimutta Arahats*, those *Arahats* who are *ubhatobhāga-vimutta* enjoy a twofold liberation. Through their mastery over the formless attainments, they are liberated from the material body (*rūpakāya*), capable of dwelling, in this very life, in the meditations corresponding to the immaterial planes of existence; through their attainment of Arahatship, they are liberated from the mental body (*nāmakāya*), presently free from all defilements, and sure of final emancipation from future becoming. Only *paññāvimutta Arahats* possess the second of these two liberations.

The double liberation of the *ubhatobhāgavimutta Arahat* should not be confused with another double liberation frequently mentioned in the *suttas* in connection with Arahatship. This second pair of liberations, called "*cetovimutti paññāvimutti*," "liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom," is shared by all *Arahats*. It appears in the stock passage descriptive of Arahatship: "With the destruction of the cankers, he here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge." That this twofold liberation belongs to *paññāvimutta Arahats* as well as those who are *ubhatobhāgavimutta* is made clear by the Putta Sutta, where the stock passage is used for two types of *Arahats* called the "white lotus recluse" and the "red lotus recluse":

> *"How, Monks, is a person a white lotus recluse (samaṇapuṇḍārika)? Here, Monks, with the destruction of the cankers, a Monk here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge. Yet, he does not dwell experiencing the eight deliverances with his body. Thus, Monks, a person is a 'white lotus recluse'.*
>
> *"And how, Monks, is a person a red lotus recluse (samaṇapaduma)? Here, Monks, with the destruction of the cankers, a Monk here and now enters and dwells in the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, having realized it for himself with direct knowledge. And he dwells experiencing the eight deliverances with his body. Thus, Monks, a person is a 'red lotus recluse'."*[931]

Since the description of these two types coincides with that of *paññāvimutta* and *ubhatobhāgavimutta*, the two pairs may be identified, the white lotus recluse with the *paññāvimutta,* the red lotus recluse with the *ubhatobhāgavimutta.* Yet, the *paññāvimutta Arahat*, while lacking the experience of the eight deliverances, still has both liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom.

When liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom are joined together and described as "cankerless" (*anāsava*), they can be taken to indicate two aspects of the

[930] *Saṁyutta Nikāya* Commentary II, 125.
[931] *Anguttara Nikāya* II, 87.

Arahat's deliverance. Liberation of mind signifies the release of his mind from craving and its associated defilements, liberation by wisdom the release from ignorance: "With the fading away of lust, there is liberation of mind, with the fading away of ignorance, there is liberation by wisdom."[932] "As he sees and understands thus, his mind is liberated from the canker of sense desire, from the canker of existence, from the canker of ignorance"[933] — here, release from the first two cankers can be understood as liberation of mind, release from the canker of ignorance as liberation by wisdom. In the Commentaries, "liberation of mind" is identified with the concentration factor in the fruition attainment of Arahatship, "liberation by wisdom," with the wisdom factor.

Since every *Arahat* reaches Arahatship through the Noble Eightfold Path, he must have attained supramundane *jhāna* in the form of right concentration, the eighth factor of the path, defined as the four *jhānas*. This *jhāna* remains with him as the concentration of the fruition attainment of Arahatship, which occurs at the level of supramundane *jhāna* corresponding to that of his path. Thus, he always stands in possession of at least the supramundane *jhāna* of fruition, called the "cankerless liberation of mind." However, this consideration does not reflect back on his mundane attainments, requiring that every *Arahat* possess mundane *jhāna*.

Although early Buddhism acknowledges the possibility of a dry-visioned Arahatship, the attitude prevails that *jhānas* are still desirable attributes in an *Arahat*. They are of value not only prior to final attainment, as a foundation for insight, but retain their value even afterwards. The value of *jhāna* in the stage of Arahatship, when all spiritual training has been completed, is twofold. One concerns the *Arahat's* inner experience, the other his outer significance as a representative of the *Buddha's* dispensation.

On the side of inner experience, the *jhānas* are valued as providing the *Arahat* with a "blissful dwelling here and now" (*diṭṭhadhammasukhavihāra*). The *suttas* often show *Arahats* attaining to *jhāna*, and the *Buddha* Himself declares the four *jhānas* to be figuratively a kind of *nibbāna* in this present life.[934] With respect to levels and factors, there is no difference between the mundane *jhānas* of an *Arahat* and those of a non-*Arahat*. The difference concerns their function. For non-*Arahats*, the mundane *jhānas* constitute wholesome *kamma*; they are deeds with a potential to produce results, to precipitate rebirth in a corresponding realm of existence. But, in the case of an *Arahat*, mundane *jhāna* no longer generates *kamma*. Since he has eradicated ignorance and craving, the roots of *kamma*, his actions leave no residue; they have no capacity to generate results. For him, the jhānic consciousness is a mere functional consciousness which comes and goes and, once gone, disappears without a trace.

The value of the *jhānas*, however, extends beyond the confines of the *Arahat's* personal experience to testify to the spiritual efficacy of the *Buddha's* dispensation. The *jhānas* are regarded as ornamentations of the *Arahat*, testimonies to the accomplishment of the spiritually perfect person and the effectiveness of the teaching he follows. A

[932] *Anguttara Nikāya* I, 61.
[933] *Majjhima Nikāya* I, 183—184.
[934] *Anguttara Nikāya* IV, 453—454.

worthy Monk is able to "gain at will without trouble or difficulty, the four *jhānas* pertaining to the higher consciousness, blissful dwellings here and now." This ability to gain the *jhānas* at will is a "quality that makes a Monk an elder." When accompanied by several other spiritual accomplishments, it is an essential quality of "a recluse who graces recluses" and of a Monk who can move unobstructed in the four directions. Having ready access to the four *jhānas* makes an elder dear and agreeable, respected and esteemed by his fellow Monks. Facility in gaining the *jhānas* is one of the eight qualities of a completely inspiring Monk (*samantapāsādika bhikkhu*), perfect in all respects; it is also one of the eleven foundations of faith (*saddhā pada*). It is significant that, in all these lists of qualities, the last item is always the attainment of Arahatship, "the cankerless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom," showing that all desirable qualities in a *Bhikkhu* culminate in Arahatship.[935]

The higher the degree of his mastery over the meditative attainments, the higher the esteem in which an *Arahat* Monk is held and the more praiseworthy his achievement is considered. Thus, the *Buddha* says of the *ubhatobhāgavimutta Arahat*: "There is no liberation in both ways higher and more excellent than this liberation in both ways."[936]

The highest respect goes to those Monks who possess not only liberation in both ways, but the six *abhiññās*, or "super-knowledges": (1) the exercise of psychic powers; (2) the divine ear; (3) the ability to read the minds of others; (4) the recollection of past lives; (5) knowledge of the death and rebirth of beings; and (6) knowledge of final liberation. The *Buddha* declares that a Monk endowed with the six *abhiññās* is worthy of gifts and hospitality, worthy of offerings and reverential salutations, a supreme field of merit for the world.[937] In the period after the *Buddha's* demise, what qualified a Monk to give guidance to others was his endowment with ten qualities: (1) moral virtue; (2) learning; (3) contentment; (4—7) mastery over the four *jhānas*; (8) the five mundane *abhiññās*; (9) attainment of the cankerless liberation of mind; and (10) liberation by wisdom.[938] Perhaps it was because he was extolled by the *Buddha* for his facility in the meditative attainments and the *abhiññās* that the venerable Mahākassapa assumed the leadership of the first great Buddhist council held in Rājagaha after the *Buddha's* passing away.

The graduation in the veneration given to *Arahats* on the basis of their mundane spiritual achievements implies something about the value system of early Buddhism that is not often recognized. It suggests that, while final liberation may be the ultimate and most important value, it is not the sole value even in the spiritual domain. Alongside it, as embellishments rather than alternatives, stand mastery over the range of the mind and mastery over the sphere of the knowable. The first is accomplished by the attainment of the eight mundane *jhānas*, the second by the attainment of the *abhiññās.* Together, final liberation adorned with this twofold mastery is esteemed as the highest and most desirable way of actualizing the ultimate goal. ■

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[935] The references are to *Anguttara Nikāya* II, 23; III, 131, 135, 114; IV, 314—315; V, 337.
[936] *Dīgha Nikāya* II, 71.
[937] *Anguttara Nikāya* III, 280—281.
[938] *Majjhima Nikāya* III, 11—12.

Further Reading

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48

The State of an Arahant

"Though one may be well-versed in the scriptures and be able to recite them from beginning to end, if one does not put into practice their teachings, then, such a heedless one may be likened to a cowherd who counts someone else's cattle — that one will gain none of the benefits of living the Holy Life.

"Though one may know little of the scriptures, if one nonetheless puts into practice their teachings, forsaking lust, hatred, and false views, truly knowing, with a disciplined mind, clinging to nothing either in this life or the next, then, that one will surely gain the benefits of living the Holy Life."[939]

The *Tipiṭaka* abounds with interesting and elevating sayings that describe the peaceful and happy state of an *Arahant*, who abides in the world till the end of his life, serving other seekers of truth by example and by precept.

In the *Dhammapada*,[940] the *Buddha* states:

"For him who has completed his journey,[941] *for him who is without sorrow,*[942] *for him who is wholly free from everything,*[943] *for him who has destroyed the Ties,*[944] *the fever [of passion] does not exist.*[945]

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[939] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verses 19—20.

[940] *Dhammapada*, VII, The Arahant, verses 90—99; XV, Happiness, verses 197—200; XXVI, The Brāhmaṇa, assorted verses.

[941] The reference is to one who has completed life in the cycle of existence, that is, an *Arahant*.

[942] One gives up sorrow upon attaining *Anāgāmī*, the third stage of Sainthood. It is at this stage that one completely eradicates attachment to sense-desires and ill will, or aversion.

[943] *Sabbadhi*, the five Aggregates, etc.

[944] There are four kinds of Ties (*ganthas*): (1) covetousness (*abhijjhā*); (2) ill will (*vyāpāda*); (3) indulgence in (wrongful) rites and ceremonies (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*); and (4) adherence to one's preconceived ideas as truth, that is, dogmatism, or fanaticism (*idaṁ saccābhinivesa*): "These things are Ties since they tie this mental and material body."

[945] This verse refers to the ethical state of an *Arahant*. Here, fever is both physical and mental. An *Arahant* can experience bodily fever as long as he is alive, but he is not worried by it. He does not, however, experience the fever (mental heat) of passions.

"Those who are mindful exert themselves. They are not attached to any abode. Like swans that quit their pools, home after home, they abandon [and go].[946]

"They for whom there is no accumulation,[947] *who reflect well over their food,*[948] *who have Deliverance,*[949] *which is Void and Signless, as their object, their course, like that of birds in the sky, cannot be traced.*

"He whose corruptions are destroyed, he who is not attached to food, he who has Deliverance, which is Void and Signless, as his object, his path, like that of birds in the sky, cannot be traced.

"He whose senses are subdued, like steeds well trained by a charioteer, he whose pride is destroyed and is free from the corruptions, such a steadfast one even the gods hold dear.

"Like the earth, a balanced and well-disciplined person harbors no resentment. He is comparable to an Indakhīla.[950] *He is like a pool unsullied by mud — life's wanderings do not arise*[951] *to such a balanced one.*[952]

"Calm is his mind, calm is his speech, calm is his action, who, rightly knowing, is wholly freed,[953] *perfectly peaceful,*[954] *and equipoised.*

"The man[955] *who is not credulous,*[956] *who understands the Uncreated (nibbāna),*[957] *who has cut off the links,*[958] *who has put an end to occasion*[959] *[of good and evil], who has eschewed*[960] *all desires,*[961] *he, indeed, is a supreme man.*

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[946] *Arahants* wander wherever they like without any attachment to any particular place, inasmuch as they are free from the conception of "I" and "mine."

[947] There are two kinds of accumulation, namely, (1) karmic activities and (2) the necessities of life. The former tend to prolong life in *saṁsāra*, and the latter, though essential, may prove an obstacle to spiritual progress.

[948] To get rid of the desire for food.

[949] *Nibbāna* is Deliverance (*vimokkha*) from suffering. It is called Void, because it is void of lust, hatred, and ignorance, not because it is nothingness or annihilation. *Nibbāna* is a positive supramundane state that cannot be described by mundane words. It is Signless, because it is free from the signs of lust, hatred, and ignorance. *Arahants* experience nibbānic bliss while alive. It is not correct to say that *Arahants* exist after death or do not exist after death, for *nibbāna* is neither eternalism nor nihilism. In *nibbāna*, nothing is eternalized nor is anything — except fetters, passions, defilements, etc. — annihilated. *Arahants* experience nibbānic bliss by attaining to the fruit of Arahantship in this life itself.

[950] By *Indakhīla* is meant either a column as firm and high as that of the Sakka's or the chief column that stands at the entrance to a city. The commentators state that these *Indakhīlas* are firm posts that are erected either inside or outside the city as an embellishment. Usually, they are made of bricks or of durable wood and are octagonal in shape. Half of the post is embedded in the earth, hence, the metaphor "as firm and steady as an *Indakhīla*."

[951] Inasmuch as they are not subject to birth and death.

[952] *Tādi*, "balanced one," is one who has neither attachment to desirable objects nor aversion to undesirable objects. Nor does he cling to anything. Amidst the eight worldly conditions — gain and loss, fame and disrepute, blame and praise, happiness and pain —, an *Arahant* remains unperturbed, manifesting neither attachment nor aversion, neither elation nor depression.

[953] From all defilements.

[954] Since his mind is absolutely pure.

[955] The pun found in the original Pāḷi is lost in the translation.

"Whether in a village or in a forest, in a vale or on a hill,[962] *wherever Arahants dwell, delightful, indeed, is that place.*

"Delightful are the forests where worldlings find no delight; the passionateless[963] *will rejoice [therein], [for] they do not seek sensory pleasures."*

"Ah, happily do we live, without hate among those who hate; amidst hateful men, we dwell unhating.

"Ah, happily do we live in good health[964] *among the ailing; amidst ailing men, we dwell in good health.*

"Ah, happily do we live without yearning [for sensory pleasures] among those who yearn [for them]; amidst those who yearn [for them], we dwell without yearning.

"Ah, happily do we live, we who have no impediments.[965] *We shall feed on joy, like unto the gods of the Radiant Realm."*

"For whom there exists neither the hither[966] *nor the farther shore,*[967] *nor both the hither and the farther shore, he who is undistressed and unbound,*[968] *him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"He who is meditative,[969] *stainless, and secluded,*[970] *he who has done his duty and is free from corruptions,*[971] *he who has attained the Highest Good,*[972] *him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"He who does no evil through body, speech, and mind, who is restrained in these three aspects,[973] *him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"He who has cut off all fetters, who does not tremble, who has gone beyond ties, who is unbound, him I call a brāhmaṇa.

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[956] *Assaddho*, literally, "without faith." He does not merely accept from other sources, because he himself knows from personal experience.

[957] *Akata*, that is, *nibbāna*. It is so called because it is not created by anyone. *Akataññū* can also be interpreted as "ungrateful."

[958] The links of existence and rebirth. *Sandhicchedo* also means "a burglar," literally, "a house-breaker."

[959] *Hata* + *avakāso* = "he who has destroyed the opportunity."

[960] *Vanta* + *āso*; "he who eats vomit" is another meaning.

[961] By means of the four paths of Sainthood. Gross forms of desire are eradicated in the first three stages, while the subtle forms are eradicated in the last stage.

[962] *Ninna* and *thala*, literally, "low-lying grounds" and "elevated grounds," respectively.

[963] The passionless *Arahants* rejoice in secluded forests, which have no attraction for worldlings.

[964] Free from the disease of passions.

[965] *Kiñcana*, such as lust, hatred, and delusion, which are hindrances to spiritual progress.

[966] *Pāraṁ*, the six personal sense-fields.

[967] *Apāraṁ*, the six external sense-fields.

[968] Not grasping anything as "me" and "mine."

[969] He who practices calm-abiding (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*).

[970] *Āsīnaṁ* = "living alone in the forest."

[971] By realizing the Four Noble Truths and eradicating the Fetters.

[972] That is, *nibbāna.*

[973] That is, who is restrained in body, speech, and mind.

"He who has cut the strap,[974] *the thong,*[975] *and the rope,*[976] *together with the appendages,*[977] *who has thrown off the crossbar,*[978] *who is enlightened,*[979] *him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"He who, without anger, endures reproach, flogging, and punishments, whose power — the potent army — is patience, him I call a brāhmaṇa.

"He who is not wrathful, but is dutiful,[980] *virtuous, free from craving, self-controlled, and bears his final body,*[981] *him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"Like water on a lotus leaf, like a mustard seed on the point of a needle, he who does not cling to sensory pleasures, him I call a brāhmaṇa.

"He who realizes here in this world the destruction of his sorrow, who has laid the burden[982] *aside and is emancipated, him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"He whose knowledge is deep, who is wise, who is skilled in the right and the wrong way,[983] *who has reached the highest goal, him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"He who does not associate either with householders or with the homeless ones, who wanders without abode, who is without desires, him I call a brāhmaṇa.

"He who has laid aside the cudgel in his dealings with beings,[984] *whether feeble or strong, who neither harms nor kills, him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"He who is friendly among those who are hostile, who is peaceful among those who are violent, who is unattached among those who are attached,[985] *him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"In whom lust, hatred, pride, and detraction are fallen away like a mustard seed from the point of a needle, him I call a brāhmaṇa.

"He who utters gentle, instructive, true words, who, by his speech, gives offence to none, him I call a brāhmaṇa.

"He who has no desires, whether pertaining to this world or to the next, who is desireless and emancipated, him I call a brāhmaṇa.

"Herein, he who has transcended both good and bad and the ties[986] *as well, who is sorrowless, stainless, and pure, him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"He who is as spotless as the moon, who is pure, serene, and unperturbed, who has destroyed craving for becoming, him I call a brāhmaṇa.

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[974] That is, hatred.
[975] That is, craving.
[976] That is, heresies.
[977] That is, latent tendencies.
[978] That is, ignorance.
[979] That is, the *Buddha* — He who has understood the Four Noble Truths.
[980] That is, devoted to religious practice.
[981] Because he, having destroyed the passions, will be born no more.
[982] The burden of the Aggregates.
[983] Who knows the way to the woeful states, to the blissful states, and to *nibbāna*.
[984] Who deals honestly, openly, and respectfully with others, who seeks no self-advantage, who is free from ulterior motives, who neither harms nor causes to be harmed, who lives in accordance with good virtue, who is wise and prudent.
[985] Those who are attached to the Aggregates.
[986] The ties of lust, hatred, delusion, and false views.

"He who, discarding human ties and transcending celestial ties, is completely delivered from all ties, him I call a brāhmaṇa.

"He has given up likes[987] *and dislikes,*[988] *who is cooled and is without the underlying bases,*[989] *who has conquered the world,*[990] *and is strenuous, him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"He who has no clinging to aggregates that are past, future, or present, who is without clinging and grasping,[991] *him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"The fearless,[992] *the noble, the hero, the great sage,*[993] *the conqueror,*[994] *the desireless, the cleanser [of defilements],*[995] *the enlightened,*[996] *him I call a brāhmaṇa.*

"That sage who knows his former abodes, who sees the blissful[997] *and the woeful*[998] *states, who has reached the end of births,*[999] *who, with superior wisdom, has perfected himself,*[1000] *who has completed [the Holy Life],*[1001] *and reached the end of all passions, him I call a brāhmaṇa."* ■

Further Reading

Bomhard, Allan R. 2013. *The Dhammapada: The Path of the Dhamma*. Charleston, SC: Charleston Buddhist Fellowship. Originally published in 2007.

[987] That is, attachment to sense-desires.
[988] *Arati* — according to the Commentary, this refers to dislike for the forest life.
[989] *Upadhi* = "substratum of existence" — there are four kinds of *upadhi*: (1) the five aggregates (*khandha*); (2) the passions, or mental defilements (*kilesa*); (3) volitional activities (*abhisaṁkhāra*); and (4) sense-desires (*kāma*). In the *suttas*, *upadhi* occurs frequently in the *Sutta Nipāta*, and, with reference to *nibbāna*, in the phrase "the abandoning of all underlying bases (that is, all substrata of existence)." Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 216.
[990] That is, the world of Aggregates.
[991] Nothing whatsoever should be clung to or grasped at as being "I" or "mine" — Cf. Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu, *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1994]).
[992] *Usabhaṁ* = "fearless as a bull."
[993] *Mahesiṁ* — the seeker of higher morality, concentration, and wisdom.
[994] *Vijatāvinaṁ* — the conqueror of passions.
[995] *Nahātakaṁ* — he who has washed away all impurities.
[996] *Buddhaṁ* — he who has understood the Four Noble Truths.
[997] *Sagga* — the six celestial Realms, the sixteen *rūpa* Realms, and the four *arūpa* Realms.
[998] *Apāya* — the four woeful states, namely, the animal realm, the realm of hungry ghosts (*petas*), the demon realm (*asuras*), and hell.
[999] *Jātikkhayaṁ* — that is, Arahantship.
[1000] *Abhiññāvosito* — that is, reached the culmination by comprehending that which should be comprehended, by discarding that which should be discarded, by realizing that which should be realized, and by developing that which should be developed.
[1001] *Sabbavositosānaṁ* — that is, having lived the Holy Life, which culminates in wisdom pertaining to the Path of Arahantship, the end of all passions.

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49

The Bodhisatta Path

"I have gone through many rounds of birth and death, seeking, but not finding, the builder of this house.[1002] *Sorrowful, indeed, is birth and death again and again!*

"But now I have seen you, Oh house-builder; you shall not build this house [for me] again — its rafters are broken; its ridgepole is shattered. My mind has reached the unconditioned;[1003] *the end of craving*[1004] *has been attained.*[1005]

"Those who have not practiced spiritual disciplines,[1006] *who have not acquired wealth in their youth,*[1007] *pine away, like old herons in a lake without fish."*[1008]

Modes of Enlightenment

In the teachings of the *Buddha*, for the realization of the ultimate Goal, there are three modes of Enlightenment (*bodhi*), one of which an aspirant may choose, in

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[1002] The "house" is the body, the "house-builder" is craving. "Seeking, but not finding, the builder of this house" means failing to attain Enlightenment.

[1003] *Nibbāna*.

[1004] The Fruit of Arahantship.

[1005] Verses 153 and 154 of the *Dhammapada* are the expressions (paeans) of the intense and sublime joy that the *Buddha* felt at the moment He attained Enlightenment. As such, they are replete with a wealth of sublime meaning and deep feeling. Here, the *Buddha* admits His past wanderings in cyclic existence, which thus proves His belief in rebirth. He was compelled to wander, and, consequently, to suffer as long as He could not find the builder of this house, the body. In His final birth, He discovered, by His own intuitive wisdom, the elusive builder residing not outside but within the recesses of His own mind. It was craving (*taṇhā*) or attachment, a self-creation, a mental element latent in all. The discovery of the builder is the eradication of craving by attaining Arahantship. The rafters of this self-created house are the defilements (*kilesas*). The ridge-pole that supports the rafters is ignorance (*avijjā*). The destruction of the ridge-pole of ignorance by wisdom (*paññā*) results in the complete demolition of the house. With the demolition of the house, the mind attains the unconditioned, which is *nibbāna*.

[1006] Those who have not lived the Holy Life.

[1007] Not having acquired wealth at the time when it was possible to obtain it or to maintain the wealth that had been acquired.

[1008] This famous paean of joy only appears in the *Dhammapada*, XI, Old Age, verses 153—155.

accordance with his particular temperament — they are: (1) *sāvaka-bodhi*,[1009] (2) *pacceka-bodhi*,[1010] and (3) *sammā-sambodhi*.

Sāvaka-bodhi is the Enlightenment of a disciple. This is known as the *Arahant* Path. He who aspires to become an *Arahant* usually seeks the guidance of a superior enlightened instructor. A slight indication from an understanding instructor would alone be sufficient for a spiritually advanced aspirant to progress on the upward path of Enlightenment. Venerable Sāriputta, for instance, attained the first stage of Sainthood on hearing only half a stanza from the *Arahant* Assaji. The sorrow-afflicted Paṭācārā, who lost all those dear to her under tragic circumstances, attained Arahantship by watching the water that washed her feet. The child-like Kisāgotamī, who implored the *Buddha* for a cure for her dead infant, attained Sainthood by watching a lamp that was being extinguished. Cūḷa Panthaka, who could not memorize a simple verse after four months, attained Arahantship by meditating on impermanence while handling a clean piece of white cloth in his hand, glaring at the sun.

After achieving his goal, an *Arahant* devotes the remainder of his life to serving other seekers of peace by example and by precept. First, he purifies himself, and, then, he endeavors to help others achieve Deliverance by expounding to them the teachings that he himself has followed. An *Arahant* is more qualified to teach the *Dhamma* than ordinary worldling teachers, who have no realization of Truth, since he speaks from personal experience.

There is nothing selfish in the noble ideal of Arahantship, for Arahantship is gained only by eradicating all forms of selfishness. Self-illusion and Egoism are some of the fetters that have to be discarded in order to attain Arahantship. The wise men and women who lived at the time of the *Buddha*, and others later, benefited by the golden opportunity offered by Him to gain Enlightenment in this present life itself.

Pacceka-bodhi is the independent Enlightenment of a highly evolved person who achieves his goal by his own efforts without seeking any external aid. Such a holy person is termed a *Pacceka* (Private) *Buddha* because he lacks the power to purify and serve others by expounding the *Dhamma* that he himself discovered. Nevertheless, he teaches morality.

Pacceka Buddhas arise only during those periods when the Teachings do not exist. Their number is not limited only to one at a particular time, as in the case of *Sammā-Sambuddhas*. Although the Buddha Gotama of the present era has passed away, we are still living in a *Buddha* cycle, for the Teachings still exist in their pristine purity. Accordingly, no *Pacceka Buddhas* arise during this period. In the Khaggavisāna Sutta of the *Sutta Nipāta*, some beautiful sayings of *Pacceka Buddhas* are preserved. A few of their wise utterances are quoted below:

> *"Leaving aside the cudgel towards all beings, harming none of them, let one not yearn for sons or friends, but let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."*

[1009] *Sāvaka*, literally, "a hearer." Sanskrit *śrāvaka*.
[1010] Sanskrit *pratyeka-bodhi*.

"Attachment arises from companionship, dissatisfaction proceeds from attachment. Observing the perils resulting from attachment, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."

"If one finds a wise friend, a companion living in accordance with good virtue, prudent and having conquered all dangers, then, live with him happily and mindfully.

"If one does not find a wise friend, a companion living in accordance with wise virtues, and prudent, then, like a ruler who has abandoned his conquered country, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."

"Certainly, we praise the acquisition of friendship and friends — those who are either higher or equal in attainment or development should be associated with. Not finding such friends, enjoying blameless food, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."

"Many keep companionship with each other for the sake of self-advantage. Today, it is difficult to find friends free from ulterior motives. They are clever enough to obtain personal advantages and, therefore, are despicable. Knowing this, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."

"Variegated, sweet, and enchanting are sensory pleasures. In diverse forms, they seduce the heart. Recognizing their menace, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."

"Cold and heat, hunger, thirst, wind, sun, mosquitoes, and snakes — overcome them all and live alone like a rhinoceros horn."

"Like a lion that does not tremble at every sound, like the wind that does not cling to the meshes of a net, like the lotus that is unsoiled by the mud, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."

"In due season, cultivate loving-kindness, equanimity, compassion, release, and appreciative joy, and, unthwarted by the world, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."

Sammā-Sambodhi is the Supreme Enlightenment of a most developed, most compassionate, most loving, all-knowing perfect being. He who attains this *bodhi* is called a *Sammā-Sambuddha*, literally, a "Fully Self-enlightened One." He is so called because he not only comprehends the *Dhamma* by his own efforts and wisdom but also expounds the doctrine to seekers of truth to purify and save them from this ever-recurring cycle of birth and death (*saṁsāra*). Unlike the *Pacceka Buddhas*, only one Supreme

Buddha can arise at a particular time, just as, on certain trees, one flower alone can blossom.

He who aspires to attain Sammā-Sambuddhahood is called a *Bodhisatta*. The path of Bodhisattahood is the most refined and the most beautiful ideal that could ever, in this ego-centric world, be conceived, for what is nobler than a life of service and purity?

Those who, in the course of their wanderings in *saṁsāra*, wish to serve others and reach the ultimate perfection of a *Sammā-Sambuddha*, are free to pursue the *Bodhisatta* Path, but there is no compulsion that all must strive to attain Buddhahood, which, to say the least, is practically impossible. Critics who contend that the *Bodhisatta* Ideal was evolved to counteract the tendency to a cloistered, placid, and inert monastic life, only reveal their lack of understanding of the pure *Buddhadhamma*.

The *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-Āloka*, a later Sanskrit work, a sub-commentary to the *Prajñā Pāramitā*,[1011] states:

> *The great disciples,*[1012] *having attained the two kinds of Enlightenment*[1013] *with and without residue, remain with their minds full of fear, since they are deprived of great compassion and highest wisdom. Owing to the cessation of the force of life, produced by the previous biotic force, the attainment of nirvāṇa becomes impossible. But, in reality, [the Hīnayāna Saints] are possessed only of that seeming nirvāṇa that is called the nirvāṇa resembling an extinguished light. The births in the three spheres of existence have ceased, but, after their worldly existence has come to an end, the Arahants are born in the most pure sphere of Buddhist activity in the unaffected plane, in a state of perpetual trance and abiding within the petals of lotus flowers. Thereafter, the Buddha Amitābha and other Buddhas resembling the sun arouse them in order to remove the undefiled ignorance. Thereupon, the Arahants make their creative effort for Supreme Enlightenment, and, though they abide in a state of deliverance, they act [in the phenomenal world] as if they were making a descent to hell. And gradually, having accumulated all the factors for the attainment of Enlightenment, they become teachers*[1014] *of living beings.*

This is an absolutely preposterous view completely foreign to the spirit of the original Teachings of the *Buddha*. It is argued that Arahantship is selfish and that all must strive to attain Buddhahood to save others. Well, one might ask: "What is the objective of the *Buddha's* Teachings? Is it to make others attain Arahantship and save them?" If so, the logical conclusion is that Buddhahood itself is selfishness, which is absurd. The sole objective of the *Buddha's* Teachings is the extinction of suffering (*dukkha*) and release from conditioned existence (*saṁsāra*).

[1011] These are Mahāyāna writings and, like other Mahāyāna scriptures (*sūtras*), commentaries, and sub-commentaries, do not reflect the original Teachings of the *Buddha*.

[1012] *Sāvakas*.

[1013] That is, the Enlightenment of the *sāvaka* and that of the *Pacceka Buddha*.

[1014] That is, *Buddhas*.

Supreme Buddhahood[1015] is indisputably the best and noblest of the three paths, but all are not capable of achieving this highest ideal. Surely, all scientists cannot be Einsteins and Newtons — there must be lesser scientists who contribute to human knowledge according to their capabilities.

The Pāḷi term *Bodhisatta* is composed of *bodhi*, which means "wisdom," or "enlightenment," and *satta*, which means "devoted to," or "intent upon." A *Bodhisatta*, therefore, means one who is devoted to, or intent upon, Wisdom, or Enlightenment. The Sanskritized form is *Bodhisattva*, which means "one aspiring to become a *Buddha*." This term is generally applied to anyone who is striving for Enlightenment, but, in the strictest sense of the term, it should only be applied to those who are destined to become supremely Enlightened *Buddhas*.

In one sense, all are potential *Buddhas*, for Buddhahood is not the exclusive prerogative of specially gifted persons.

It should be noted that Buddhists do not believe that there lies dormant in us all a divine spark[1016] that needs development, for they deny the existence of a Creator God. However, Buddhists are conscious of the innate possibilities and the creative power of man.

Buddhism also denies the existence of a permanent self, soul, or ego-entity that transmigrates from life to life, acquiring all experiences. Instead of an unchanging soul, the so-called "essence" of man, Buddhism posits a dynamic life-flux, where there is a continuity of process.

As a man, Prince Siddhattha, by His own wisdom and love, attained Buddhahood, the highest state of perfection any being can aspire to, and He revealed to mankind the only path that leads thereto. A singular characteristic of Buddhism is that anyone may aspire to the state of the teacher himself, if only he makes the necessary exertion. The *Buddha* did not claim any monopoly on Buddhahood. It is not a sort of evolutionary process. It may be achieved by one's own effort without the help of another. The *Buddha* does not condemn men by calling them wretched sinners, but, on the contrary, He encourages them, saying that they are pure in heart at conception. Instead of disheartening followers, creating an inferiority complex, and reserving the exalted state of Buddhahood to Himself, He encourages others and inspires them to emulate Him.

[1015] Supreme Buddhahood (*Sammā-Sambodhi*) is the state attained by one who has discovered and realized, by his own intuitive powers, and who clearly proclaims, the liberating law (*Dhamma*) that had become lost to the world. "Now, someone, concerning things not heard before, understands by himself the Truth, and he therein attains omniscience and gains mastery in the powers. Such a one is called a 'Supreme *Buddha*,' or Fully Enlightened One" (*Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, *Puggalapaññatti*). The doctrine characteristic of all the *Buddhas* and each time rediscovered by them and fully explained to the world, consists of the Four Noble Truths of Suffering, its Origin, its Cessation, and the Way leading to its Cessation (see Chapter 21 for an in-depth discussion of the Four Noble Truths). Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), pp. 186—187.

[1016] That is, so-called "*Buddha*-nature" (*Tathāgatagarbha*) — according to Mahāyāna Buddhism, the true, immutable, and eternal nature of all beings. Since all beings possess this *Buddha*-nature, it is possible for them to attain enlightenment and become a *Buddha*. These views are rejected by Theravādin Buddhism.

A *Bodhisatta* does not necessarily have to be a Buddhist. We may find ever-loving *Bodhisattas* among Buddhists today, though they may be unaware of their lofty aspirations, and *Bodhisattas* may also be found among non-Buddhists as well.

Three Types of Bodhisattas

According to Buddhism, there are three types of *Bodhisattas*: (1) "Intellectual *Bodhisattas*" (*Paññādhika*), (2) "Devotional *Bodhisattas*" (*Saddhādhika*), and (3) "Energetic *Bodhisattas*" (*Viriyādhika*).

Intellectual *Bodhisattas* are less devotional and more energetic; devotional ones are less energetic and more intellectual; energetic ones are less intellectual and more devotional. Seldom, if ever, are these three characteristics harmoniously combined in one person. The Buddha Gotama is cited as one of the intellectual group.

According to the Scriptures, the intellectual ones attain Buddhahood within a short period, devotional ones take a longer time, and energetic ones take longer still.

Intellectual *Bodhisattas* concentrate more on the development of Wisdom and on the practice of meditation than on the observance of external forms of worship, or homage. They are always guided by reason and accept nothing on blind faith. They make no self-surrender and are not slaves either to scripture or to an individual. They prefer solitary meditation. With their silent but powerful thoughts of peace radiating from their solitary retreats, they render moral help to suffering humanity.

The element of piety — *saddhā*, or "Trustful Confidence" — is predominant in Devotional *Bodhisattas*. With *saddhā* as their companion, they achieve their goal.

These *Bodhisattas* take a keen interest in all forms of homage. The image of the *Buddha* is a great inspiration to them.

It should be understood, at this point, that Buddhists do not worship an image. They pay respect to what it represents and reflect on the virtues of the *Buddha*. The more they think of the *Buddha*, the more they esteem Him and want to emulate Him. This is the reason why Buddhism does not denounce these external forms of reverence, or homage (*āmisa pūjā*[1017]), though, without question, practice (*paṭipatti pūjā*) is far more commendable and indisputably superior. But dry intellect has to be flavored with *saddhā* to obtain satisfactory results. Inasmuch as excessive *saddhā* may also sometimes be detrimental, it has to be restrained by wisdom.

The Energetic *Bodhisattas* always seek opportunities to be of service to others. Nothing gives them greater delight than active service. For them, "work is happiness, and happiness is work." They are not happy unless they are active. As King Sanghabodhi of Śri Lanka said, "[they] bear this body of flesh and blood for the good and happiness of the world." They live not only for themselves but for others as well.

This spirit of selfless service is one of the chief characteristics of all *Bodhisattas*. With relentless energy, they work not as slaves but as masters. They crave for neither

[1017] *Pūjā* = "honor, worship, devotion."

fame nor fortune. They are only interested in service. It is immaterial to them whether others recognize their selfless service or not. They are utterly indifferent to praise or blame.

They forget themselves in their selfless service to others. They would sacrifice even life itself could such action save another fellow being.

A *Bodhisatta* who forgets himself in the service of others practices *karuṇā* (Compassion) and *mettā* (Loving-kindness) to an exceptionally high degree.

A *Bodhisatta* desires the good and welfare of the world. He loves all beings as a mother loves her only child. He identifies himself with all. To him, nothing gives more delight than to think that all are his brothers and sisters. He is like a mother, a father, a friend, a teacher, to all beings.

> *"The compassion of a Bodhisatta consists in realizing the equality of oneself with others and also the substitution of others for oneself."*

When he does so, he loses his notion of "I" and "mine" and finds no difference between himself and others. He returns good for evil and helps even unasked the very persons who have wronged him, for he knows that "the strength of a religious teacher is his patience."

> *"Being reviled, he reviles not; being beaten, he beats not; being annoyed, he annoys not. His forgiveness is unfailing, even as Mother Earth suffers in silence all that may be done to her."* ■

Further Reading

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Śāntideva. 1997. *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (Bodhicaryāvatāra)*. Translated from the Sanskrit and Tibetan by Vesna A. Wallace and B. Alan Wallace. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion. Note: This is a Mahāyāna text. There are several excellent translations available.

50

Perfections (Pāramī / Pāramitā)

"Work for the welfare of others."[1018]

Ten Virtues

There are ten transcendental virtues, which are termed *pāramī* or *pāramitā*[1019] in Pāḷi. These ten virtues, or perfections, are practiced by every *Bodhisatta* in order to gain Supreme Enlightenment, *Sammā-Sambodhi*. They are:

1. Generosity (*dāna*);
2. Morality (*sīla*);
3. Renunciation (*nekkhamma*);
4. Wisdom (*paññā*);
5. Energy (*viriya*);
6. Patience (*khanti*);
7. Truthfulness (*sacca*);
8. Determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*);
9. Loving-kindness (*mettā*);
10. Equanimity (*upekkhā*).

According to the *Cariyā Piṭaka* Commentary, *pāramīs* are those virtues that are cultivated with compassion, guided by reason, uninfluenced by selfish motives, and unsullied by wrong belief and all feelings of self-conceit.

The actions of *Bodhisattas* are absolutely selfless, being prompted solely by compassion towards all beings. So boundless is their love and so pervasive is their infinite compassion that, unceasingly throughout the series of their countless lives, they strive to diminish suffering, to elevate to greater honor the poor and the lowly, and to help the needy in every possible way.

They seek no delight in self-indulgence, while their less fortunate brothers and sisters are steeped in misery. To alleviate suffering, they would not hesitate to sacrifice

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[1018] *Sutta Nipāta*.

[1019] *Pāramī*, literally, "that which enables one to go beyond," that is, "to *bodhi*," or "Enlightenment." The Pāḷi term *pāramitā* is also used in the same sense.

their most cherished possessions, not excepting life itself, as illustrated in the story in the *Vyāghrī Jātaka* from the *Jātakamālā*.

With heart full of compassion, they work for the welfare and happiness of all beings, though always guided by reason. They are generously endowed with all the essential qualities of both head and heart in their full development, which are dedicated to the service of the world at large.

In serving others, *Bodhisattas* are not motivated by a desire for power or worldly possessions. Knowing, as they do, that fame comes unsought to them who are worthy of it, why should they pursue it?

They are completely altruistic in their motives; egoism plays no part in their disinterested activities.

> *"'Listen, Monks and householders, I can do this; I can do that. I am right, and you are wrong. Obey me.' Fools, thinking thus, only increase their desires and pride."*[1020]

Such narrow and selfish aspirations do not enter into the minds of *Bodhisattas*.

Generosity (*Dāna*)

Dāna, or Generosity, is the first *pāramī*. It confers upon the giver the double blessing of inhibiting immoral thoughts of selfishness, while developing pure thoughts of selflessness. "It blesses him that gives and him that receives."

Bodhisattas are not concerned as to whether the recipient is truly in need or not, for their one object in practicing generosity, as they do, is to eliminate craving that lies dormant within themselves. The joy of service, its attendant happiness, and the alleviation of suffering are other blessings of generosity.

In extending their love with supernormal generosity, they make no distinction between one being and another, but they use judicious discrimination in their generosity. If, for instance, a drunkard were to seek their help, and, if they were convinced that the drunkard would misuse their gift, *Bodhisattas*, without hesitation, would refuse to help, for such misplaced generosity would not constitute a *pāramī*.

Should anyone seek their help for a worthy purpose, however, then, instead of assuming a forced air of self-righteousness or making false pretensions, they would simply express their deep appreciation for the opportunity afforded and willingly and humbly render every possible help. Yet, they would never set it down to their own credit as a favor conferred upon another, nor would they ever regard the man as their debtor for the service rendered. They are interested only in the good act and not in anything else springing from it. They expect no reward in return, nor do they crave enhancement of reputation from it.

[1020] *Dhammapada*, V, Fools, verse 74.

Bodhisattas, though always ready to confer a favor, seldom, if ever, stoop to ask for one. The *Brahma Jātaka* (no. 323) relates that, once upon a time, the *Bodhisatta* was leading an ascetic life in the park of a certain king who used to visit him daily and minister to his needs. Yet, for twelve long years, he refrained from asking for the boon of a pair of sandals and a leaf-parasol, trifling as they were.

They give in abundance to others, regardless of caste, creed, or color, while seeking nothing for themselves in return. A quality of their mind is perfect contentment.

In the *Kaṇha Jātaka* (no. 440), it is related that Sakka, attracted by the exemplary, virtuous life of the *Bodhisatta*, approached him and offered him a boon. According to Sakka's kindly request, the *Bodhisatta* wished for the following:

"May I harbor no malice or hatred towards my neighbor!
May I not covet my neighbor's possessions!
May I cherish no personal affection towards others!
May I possess equanimity!"

Greatly disappointed, though full of admiration for the detachment shown, Sakka entreated him to choose yet another boon. The *Bodhisatta* replied:

"Wherever in the woods I dwell,
Where all alone I dwell,
Grant no disease may mar my peace
Or break my ecstasy."

Hearing this, Sakka thought how wise Kaṇha was that, in choosing a boon, he asked for nothing connected with food but chose only things connected with the ascetic life. Yet again, Sakka asked him to choose a boon.

The *Bodhisatta* replied:

"O Sakka, Lord of the world, a choice you do declare: May no creature be harmed on my account, anywhere, O Sakka, neither in body nor in mind. This, Sakka, is my prayer."

Bodhisattas exercise this virtue of generosity to such an extent that they are prepared to give away not only wealth and other cherished possessions, but also their land, their limbs, and even their children and wives, and they are ever ready to sacrifice their own life wherever such sacrifice would benefit humanity.

The *Vessantara Jātaka* (no. 547) relates how, when Prince Vessantara was a child of only eight years, he thought with all sincerity:

"If one should need my heart, I would cut open my breast, tear it out and give it; if one should need my eyes, I would gouge them out and give them; if one should need my flesh, I would cut off what he needed."

The *Vyāghrī Jātaka*[1021] depicts an incident in which the *Bodhisatta* willingly and joyfully sacrificed his own life for the good and happiness of a starving tigress and her cubs. In the *Jātakamālā*, the story runs as follows:

> *On one occasion, when the Bodhisatta was passing through a forest, accompanied by his disciple, he saw a tigress and her three cubs near death from starvation. Moved to compassion, he asked his disciple to secure some food for them. This was but a pretext to send him away, for the Bodhisatta thought:*
>
> *"Why should I search for meat from the body of another while the whole of my own body is available? Finding other meat is a matter of chance, and I may well lose the opportunity to do my duty.*
>
> *"This body is foul and a source of suffering — he is not wise who would not rejoice at its being spent for the benefit of another. There are but two things that make one disregard the grief of another — attachment to one's own pleasure and the absence of the power of helping. But I cannot take my pleasure while another grieves, as long as I am able to help him. Why should I, therefore, be indifferent?*
>
> *"By casting myself down this precipice, I shall sacrifice my miserable body, which will feed the tigress, thus preventing her from killing her young ones and saving them from dying by the teeth of their mother.*
>
> *"Furthermore, by so doing, I shall set an example to those whose longings are for the good of the world. I shall encourage the feeble; I shall gladden those who understand the meaning of charity; and I shall inspire the virtuous. And, finally, that opportunity I have yearned for, when I might have the chance to benefit others by offering them my own limbs, this I shall obtain now, and, before long, I shall acquire Sammā-Sambuddhahood — Supreme Enlightenment."*

Thinking thus, he cast himself down the precipice, sacrificing his life so that those helpless tigers might not die of starvation.

The Newari (Nepalese) version of this interesting and pitiful story is as follows:

> *In the remote past, there lived a devout and powerful king named Mahāvaṭṭha. He had three sons, by name, Mahā Praśāda, Mahā Deva, and Mahāsattva, all good and obedient.*
>
> *One bright day, the king, accompanied by the princes and attendants, went on an excursion to a forest park. The young princes, admiring the enchanting beauty of the flowers and trees, gradually penetrated far into the thick forest.*
>
> *The attendants noticed their absence and reported the matter to the king. He ordered his ministers to go into the woods in search of them and returned to his palace.*

[1021] This is a Mahāyāna text.

The three princes, wandering through the forest, reached a mountaintop. From there, the eldest saw a starving tigress with five cubs almost on the verge of death. For seven days since her delivery, she had been without food. The cubs approached the mother to suck milk, but she had nothing to satisfy their hunger, and the tigress, driven by starvation, was clearly at the point of devouring her own cubs.

The eldest brother was the first to see the pathetic spectacle. He showed the tigress to his brothers and said: "Behold that pitiful sight, O brothers! That starving tigress is about to devour her cubs. How wretched is their situation!"

"What is their staple food, brother?" inquired Mahāsattva.

"Flesh and blood is the staple food of tigers and lions," replied Mahā Praśāda.

"The tigress seems to be very weak. Evidently, she has been without food for several days. How noble if someone could sacrifice his body for their sake!"

"But, who would be willing to make such a sacrifice?" remarked Mahā Deva.

"Surely, no one would be able to do so," stated Mahā Praśāda.

"I lack intelligence. Ignorant people like us would not be able to sacrifice their bodies for the sake of another. But, there may be selfless men of boundless compassion who would be willing to do so," said Mahāsattva in a merciful tone.

Thus, they discussed among themselves, and, casting a last glance at the helpless tigress, they departed.

Mahāsattva thought to himself: "I must sacrifice this fleeting body for the sake of this starving tigress. Foul is this body, and it is subject to decay and death. One may adorn and perfume it, but soon it will stink and perish."

Reflecting thus, he requested his brothers to proceed, inasmuch as he would be retiring to the forest for some reason or other.

He retraced his steps to the place where the tigress was resting. Hanging his garments and ornaments on a tree, again he thought:

"I must work for the welfare of others. We must be compassionate towards all beings. To serve those who need our help is our paramount duty. I will sacrifice this foul body of mine and, thus, save the tigress and her five cubs. By this meritorious act, may I gain Sammā Sambuddhahood and save all beings from the ocean of saṁsāra! May all beings be well and happy!"

Moved by compassion and inspired by the spirit of selfless service, dauntlessly, he jumped off the precipice towards the tigress.

The fall did not result in an instantaneous death. The tigress, though ruthless by nature, pitied the Bodhisattva and would not even touch the body.

The Bodhisattva thought otherwise: "Obviously, the poor animal is too weak to devour me!"

So he went in search of a weapon. He came across a bamboo splinter, and, drawing near the tigress, he cut off his neck and fell dead on the ground in a pool of blood.

The hungry tigress greedily drank the blood and devoured the flesh, leaving mere bones.

At the moment the Bodhisattva sacrificed his body, the earth quaked and waters of the ocean were disturbed, the sun's rays dimmed, eyesight was temporarily blurred, devas gave cries of "sādhu," and pārijāta flowers came down as rain from heaven.

Affected by the earthquake, the two elder brothers rightly guessed that their younger brother must have become a prey to the tigress.

"Surely, Mahāsattva must have sacrificed his life, for he spoke in a very merciful tone," said Mahā Deva.

Both of them turned back and went to the spot. They were horrified and awestruck at the unexpected sight. What they saw was not their beloved brother but a mass of bones besmeared with blood. On a tree close by, they saw the hanging garments.

They wept and fainted, and, on regaining consciousness, they returned home with a heavy heart.

On the very day the Bodhisattva sacrificed his life, the mother-queen dreamt that she was dead, that her teeth had fallen out, and that she experienced a pain as if her body were cut by a sharp weapon. Furthermore, she dreamt that a hawk came drooping down and carried off one of the three beautiful pigeons that were perched on the roof.

The queen was frightened, and, on waking, she remembered that her princes had gone for an airing in the forest. She hastened to the king and related the inauspicious dreams.

On being informed that the princes were missing, she entreated the king to send messengers in search of them.

Some ministers who had gone earlier in search for them returned to the palace with the sad news of the lamentable death of the youngest prince. Hearing it, nobody was able to refrain from weeping. The king, however, comforted the queen and, mounting an elephant, speedily hastened to the forest with his attendants and brought back the other two grieving sons.

So great was their grief that, at first, they were speechless. Later, summoning up courage, they related to their bereaved mother the heroic deed of their noble brother.

Soon, the order was given by the king to make arrangements for all of them to visit the memorable scene of the incident.

All reached the spot in due course. At the mere sight of the blood-smeared bones of the dearest son scattered here and there, both the king and the queen fainted. The Purohita Brahmin instantly poured sandalwood water over them, and they regained consciousness.

Thereupon, the king ordered his ministers to gather all the hair, bones, and garments and, heaping them together, worshipped them. Advising them to

erect a golden cetiya enshrining the relics, with grieving heart, he departed to his palace. The cetiya was afterwards named "Om Namo Buddhā."

At the end of the story, it is stated that the *cetiya* is, at present, named "Namurā."

In spite of the differences between the two versions of this story, the central point in both is the self-sacrifice of the *Bodhisatta*. It is immaterial whether the *Bodhisatta* sacrificed his life as an ascetic or a prince.

As in the other *Jātakas*, the *nidāna*, or the occasion for the *Jātaka*, appears in this one too. But the identification of the personages found at the end of all *Jātakas* is absent here.

The Newari *Jātaka* is obviously more descriptive than the Sanskrit version. The origin of the Newari version is uncertain.

Dealing with the *Bodhisatta's* mode of practicing generosity, an interesting account appears in an important text of the *Cariyā Piṭaka* Commentary.

In giving food, *Bodhisattas* intend, thereby, to endow the recipient with long life, health, beauty, happiness, strength, wisdom, and the Highest Fruit, *nibbāna*. To thirsty beings, they give drink, with the objective of quenching the thirst of passion. They give garments to acquire moral shame and moral dread; conveyances to cultivate psychic powers; fragrances for the scent of morality (*sīla*); garlands and unguents to gain the glory pertaining to the *Buddha's* virtues; seats to win the seat of Enlightenment; lodging with the hope of serving as a refuge to the world; lights to obtain the five kinds of eyes, namely, the physical eye, the eye of wisdom, the Divine Eye, the *Buddha* Eye, and the Eye of Omniscience; forms to possess the *Buddha* aura; sounds to cultivate a voice as sweet as *Brahmā's*; tastes so that they may be pleasing to all; contacts to gain the delicate form of a *Buddha*; medicine for the sake of deathlessness (*nibbāna*). They emancipate slaves in order to deliver men from the bondage of passions; they renounce children to develop paternal feelings towards all; they renounce wives to become the master of the world; they renounce kingdoms to inherit the kingdom of righteousness.

Besides revealing the altruistic attitude of *Bodhisattas*, these lofty aspirations disclose their disinterested efforts for the betterment of mankind.

Morality (*Sīla*)

Combined with the supernormal generosity of *Bodhisattas* is their virtuous conduct (*sīla*). The meaning of the Pāḷi term *sīla* is "discipline." *Sīla* consists of duties (*cāritta*) that one should perform and abstinences (*vāritta*) that one should practice. These duties towards parents, children, husband, wife, teachers, pupils, friends, Monks and Nuns, subordinates, etc. are described in detail in the Sigālovāda Sutta.[1022] The duties of a layman are described in a series of relationships, each, for mnemonic reasons, of five items:

[1022] *Dīgha Nikāya*, Pāṭikavagga, Sigālovāda Sutta, no. 31.

1. A child should minister to his parents, by: (i) supporting them; (ii) doing their duties; (iii) keeping the family lineage; (iv) acting in such a way as to be worthy of his inheritance; and, furthermore, (v) offering alms in honor of his departed relatives.

2. Parents, who are thus ministered to by their children, should: (i) dissuade them from evil; (ii) persuade them to do good; (iii) teach them an art; (iv) give them in marriage to a suitable husband or wife; and (v) hand over to them their inheritance at the proper time.

3. A pupil should minister to a teacher by: (i) rising in his presence; (ii) attending on him; (iii) listening attentively; (iv) personal service; and (v) respectfully receiving instructions.

4. Teachers thus ministered to by pupils should: (i) train them in the best discipline; (ii) make them receive that which is well held by them; (iii) teach them every suitable art and science; (iv) introduce them to their friends and associates; and (v) provide for their safety in every quarter.

5. A husband should minister to his wife by: (i) courtesy; (ii) not despising her; (iii) faithfulness; (iv) handing over authority to her; and (v) providing her with ornaments.

6. The wife who is thus ministered to by her husband should: (i) perform her duties in perfect order; (ii) be hospitable to the people around; (iii) be faithful; (iv) protect what he brings; and (v) be industrious and not lazy in discharging her duties.

7. A noble scion should minister to his friends and associates by: (i) generosity; (ii) courteous speech; (iii) promoting their welfare; (iv) equanimity; and (v) truthfulness.

8. The friends and associates who are thus ministered to by a noble son should: (i) protect him when he is heedless; (ii) protect his property when he is heedless; (iii) become a refuge when he is afraid; (iv) not forsake him when he is in danger; and (v) be considerate towards his sons and daughters.

9. A master should minister to servants and employees by: (i) assigning them work according to their strength; (ii) supplying them with food and wages; (iii) looking after them when they are ill; (iv) sharing extraordinary delicacies with them; and (v) relieving them at times.

10. The servants and employees who are thus ministered to by their master should: (i) rise before him; (ii) go to sleep after him; (iii) take only what is given; (iv) perform their duties satisfactorily; and (v) spread his good name and fame.

11. A noble scion should minister to ascetics and Brahmins by: (i) kind deeds; (ii) kind words; (iii) kind thoughts; (iv) not closing doors against them — this means not

rescinding their intention to donate alms after having already decided to do so; and (v) supplying their material needs.

12. The ascetics and Brahmins who are thus ministered to by a noble scion should: (i) dissuade him from evil; (ii) persuade him to do good; (iii) love him with a kind heart; (iv) clarify what he has already heard; and (v) point out the path to a heavenly state.

A *Bodhisatta* who fulfills all these household duties (*cārita sīla*) becomes truly a refined gentleman in the strictest sense of the term.

Apart from these obligatory duties, *Bodhisattas* endeavor their best to observe the other rules relating to *cāritta sīla* (responsibilities) and thus lead an ideal Buddhist life.

Rightly discerning the law of action and reaction, of their own accord, they refrain from evil and do good to the best of their ability. They consider it their duty to be a blessing to themselves and others and not a curse to any, whether man or animal.

Since life is precious to all and since no man has the right to take away the life of another, they extend their compassion and loving-kindness towards every living being, even to the tiniest creature that crawls at their feet, and refrain from killing or causing injury to any living creature. It is the animal instinct in man that prompts him mercilessly to kill the weak and feast on their flesh. Whether to appease one's appetite or as a pastime, it is not justifiable to kill or cause a helpless animal to be killed by any method, whether cruel or humane. And, if it is wrong to kill an animal, what must be said of human beings, however noble the motive may appear at first sight?

Furthermore, *Bodhisattas* abstain from all forms of stealing, whether direct or indirect, and thus develop honesty, trustworthiness, and uprightness. Abstaining from sexual misconduct, which debases the exalted nature of man, they try to be pure and chaste in their sex life. They avoid false speech, harsh language, slander, and frivolous talk and utter words that are true, pleasant,[1023] peaceable, and helpful. They avoid intoxicating liquors, which tend to mental distraction and confusion, and cultivate heedfulness and clarity of vision.

Bodhisattas would adhere to these five principles, which tend to control words and deeds, even though it may be against their own interests to do so. On a proper occasion, they will sacrifice not only possessions and wealth but also life itself for the sake of their principles.

It should not be thought that *Bodhisattas* are always perfect in their dealings in the course of their wanderings in *saṁsāra*. Being worldlings, they possess their own failings and limitations. The *Kanavera Jātaka* (no. 318), for example, depicts the *Bodhisatta* as a very desperate highway robber. This, however, is the exception rather than the rule.

The great importance attached by an aspirant to Buddhahood to morality is evident from the *Sīlavīmaṁsa Jātaka* (no. 362), where the *Bodhisatta* says: "Apart from virtue, wisdom has no worth."

[1023] *Bodhisattas* may also utter words that are unpleasant if they feel that doing so is more helpful.

In praise of *sīla* (morality), the foundation of all other higher virtues, Venerable Buddhaghosa writes in the *Visuddhimagga*:

> *What scent blows both with and against the wind? What stairway leads like it to heaven's gate? What door into nibbāna's city opens? The sage whose virtue is his ornament outshines the pomp and pearls of jeweled kings. In virtuous men, virtue destroys self-blame, begetting joy and praise. Thus should be known the sum of all the discourses on the power of virtue, root of merits, slayer of faults.*

Renunciation (*Nekkhamma*)

Still keener is the enthusiasm *Bodhisattas* exhibit towards *nekkhamma* (renunciation), for, by nature, they are lovers of solitude. *Nekkhamma* implies both renunciation of worldly pleasures by adopting an ascetic life and the temporary inhibition of hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) by cultivating the *jhānas* (absorptions).

Bodhisattas are neither selfish nor self-possessive but are selfless in all their activities. They are ever ready to sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of others.

Though they may sit in the lap of luxury and be immersed in worldly pleasures, they comprehend their transitoriness and the value of renunciation.

Realizing thus the vanity of fleeting material pleasures, they voluntarily leave their earthly possessions and, donning the simple ascetic garb, try to lead the Holy Life in all its purity. Here, they practice the higher morality to such an extent that they become practically selfless in all their actions. No inducement, whether fame, wealth, honor, or worldly gain, could persuade them to do anything contrary to their principles.

Sometimes, the first gray hair, as in the case of the *Makhādeva Jātaka* (no. 9), is alone a sufficient call to *Bodhisattas* to abandon a life of luxury for the independent solitary life of a hermit. At times, a dewdrop or a withered leaf may induce them to adopt the ascetic life.

As a rule, however, the practice of renunciation is not observed by *Bodhisattas*.

In the *Kusa Jātaka* (no. 531), for instance, the *Bodhisatta* was subjected to much humiliation owing to his unrestrained desire to win the hand of the beautiful princess Pabhāvati.

Again, in the *Darīmukha Jātaka* (no. 373), it is mentioned that a *Pacceka Buddha*, former friend of the *Bodhisatta*, approached him and said:

> *"Pleasures of sense are but a morass and a mire. I call them 'the triply-rooted terror.' I have pointed out that they are merely vapor and dust. Good Sir, become a brother*[1024] *and forsake them all."*

The *Bodhisatta* promptly replied:

[1024] A fellow ascetic.

"Infatuate, bound, and deeply stained am I, Brahmin, with pleasures, though to be feared they may be. But I love life and cannot deny them. Good works I undertake continually."

In the period of a Buddhaless Cycle, *Bodhisattas* would adopt the life of an ascetic and lead the holy celibate life in solitude. If born in a *Buddha* Cycle, they would lead the life of a *Bhikkhu* in strict accordance with the rules that pertain thereto. An ideal *Bhikkhu*, who leads an exemplary life, is a blessing to himself and others. He teaches both by example and by precept. He is pure within, and he purifies without.

They are very strenuous in working for their own inner spiritual development, catering, at the same time, to the spiritual needs of those lesser brothers and sisters. They are not a burden to society, because they give trouble to no one. They are like the bee that extracts honey from the flower without damaging it. They possess no property, for they have renounced everything worldly. Their needs are few, and contentment is their wealth. They do not repent for the past, nor are they worried about the future. They live in the present, free from all responsibilities and shackles in the world. They are ready to wander wherever they must for the good and happiness of others, without clinging to any abode. Under all vicissitudes of life, they maintain a balanced mind. Their free services are always at the disposal of others.

Non-Buddhist ascetics are invariably called *Paribbājakas*, *Avījakas*, *Sanyāsins*, etc. The term *Bhikkhu*[1025] has now become exclusively Buddhist.

The rules[1026] laid down for a *Bhikkhu* do not permit him to beg anything from another. He may accept the four requisites — robes, alms, lodging, and medicine — presented to him. If in need of any requisites, he is allowed to ask for them from his parents, close relatives, or from professed supporters.

A *Bhikkhu* is not bound to life-long vows. He enters the Order of his own accord in order to lead the Holy Life, and he is free to leave it whenever he chooses. However, once he dons the saffron-colored robes, the emblem of *Arahants*, he is bound to observe the rules that pertain thereto.

To lead a life of perfect purity and selfless service, to control and purify the mind with ease, to see things as they truly are, to think rightly and deeply, to develop the higher nature of man, to appreciate fully the higher spiritual values, no other mode of life affords such facilities and such great opportunities as the life of a *Bhikkhu*.

A *Bhikkhu* may lead either a contemplative or a studious life. The former is more in harmony with the ideal of a *Bhikkhu*, for the ultimate object in donning the saffron-colored robe, the emblem of sanctity and humility, is to eradicate passions and realize *nibbāna*.

[1025] Sanskrit *Bhikṣu*.

[1026] The monastic Disciplinary Code is known as the *Pātimokkha* and is contained in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. The various rules and regulations are recited in their entirety before the assembled community of fully-ordained Monks (*Bhikkhus*) on all full-moon and new moon days.

Wisdom (*Paññā*)

Nekkhamma is followed by Wisdom (*paññā*). Wisdom is the right understanding of the nature of the world in the light of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and soullessness (*anattā*). *Bodhisattas* meditate on these three characteristics, but not to such an extent that they attain Arahantship, for to do this would be deviating from their goal.

At the same time, they do not disparage worldly wisdom. They try to acquire knowledge, even if from their servants. Never do they show any desire to display their knowledge, nor are they ashamed to plead ignorance, even in public, for, under no circumstances, do they ever prove to be charlatans. What they know is always at the disposal of others, and that they impart to them without any reservations. They try their best to lead others from darkness to light.

Knowledge is of three kinds. The first is the knowledge acquired through hearing (*sutamaya paññā*). In olden times in India, before the scriptures were committed to writing, knowledge was transmitted orally and was acquired through listening, or hearing. Consequently, a learned man was then called *bahussuta* ("he who has heard much"), corresponding to English "erudition." The second kind of knowledge is acquired by thinking (*cintāmaya paññā*), that is to say, logical reasoning. The practical scientific knowledge of the West is the direct outcome of this kind of knowledge. The third is a superior kind of knowledge acquired by meditation and contemplation (*bhāvanāmaya paññā*). It is by such meditation that one realizes intuitive truths that are beyond logical reasoning. Meditation is not a passive endeavor, but an energetic striving. It leads to self-elevation, self-discipline, self-control, and self-illumination.

Wisdom is the apex of Buddhism. It is the first factor of the Noble Eightfold Path[1027] (*sammā diṭṭhi*). It is one of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment[1028] (*dhamma vicaya sambojjhanga*). It is one of the Four Means of Accomplishment[1029] (*vīmaṁsā iddhipāda*). It is one of the Five Powers[1030] (*paññābala*) and one of the Five Spiritual Faculties (*paññindriya*). It is wisdom that leads to purification and final Deliverance.

[1027] The Noble Eightfold Path consists of (1) Right Understanding; (2) Right Intention; (3) Right Speech; (4) Right Action; (5) Right Livelihood; (6) Right Effort; (7) Right Mindfulness; and (8) Right Concentration.

[1028] The Seven Factors of Enlightenment are: (1) Mindfulness; (2) Investigation of the Truth (*Dhamma-vicaya*, that is, "seeking knowledge", specifically, knowledge of the Four Noble Truths); (3) Energy; (4) Joy; (5) Relaxation; (6) Concentration; and (7) Equanimity.

[1029] The Four Means of Accomplishment are (1) Concentrated Intention (*chanda*); (2) Energy (*viriya*); (3) Consciousness (*citta*); and (4) Investigation (*vīmaṁsā*).

[1030] The Five Powers are (1) Faith (*saddhā*); (2) Energy (*viriya*); (3) Mindfulness (*sati*); (4) Concentration (*samādhi*); and (5) Understanding, or Wisdom (*paññā*). Their particular aspect, which distinguishes them from the Five Spiritual Faculties, is that they are unshakable in their opposites: (1) the power of Faith is unshakable by lack of faith or lack of belief; (2) the power of Energy is unshakable by laziness; (3) the power of Mindfulness is unshakable by forgetfulness; (4) the power of Concentration is unshakable by distraction; and (5) the power of Understanding is unshakable by ignorance. They represent, therefore, the aspect of firmness in the Spiritual Faculties. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 35.

Energy (*Viriya*)

Closely allied with *paññā* (Wisdom) is *viriya* (Energy, Effort, or Perseverance). Hence, *Viriya* does not mean physical strength, though this is an asset, but mental vigor or strength of character, which is far superior. It is defined as persistent effort to work for the welfare of others both in thought and deed. Firmly establishing themselves in *viriya*, *Bodhisattas* develop self-reliance and make it one of their prominent characteristics.

The *viriya* of a *Bodhisatta* is clearly depicted in the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* (no. 539). Shipwrecked in the open sea for seven days, the *Bodhisatta* struggled on without once giving up hope, until he was finally rescued.

They view failures as steps to success. Opposition causes them to double their exertion; dangers increase their courage. Cutting their way through difficulties, which impair the enthusiasm of the weak, surmounting obstacles, which dishearten the ordinary, they look straight towards their goal. Nor do they ever stop until their goal is reached.

To Māra, who advised the *Bodhisatta* to abandon his quest, he said:

> *"O Evil One, kinsman of the heedless! You have come here for your own sake. Even the tiniest bit of merit is of no avail. You should speak like this to those who are in need of merit, O Māra. Confidence (saddhā), self-control (tapo), perseverance (viriya), and wisdom (paññā) are mine. Why do you question me, who is thus intent, about life?*
>
> *"Even the streams and rivers will be dried up by the wind. Why should not my blood dry up through practicing austerities? When blood dries up, the bile and phlegm also dry up. When my body wastes away, more and more does my mind become clarified. Still more do my mindfulness, wisdom, and concentration become firm.*
>
> *"While I live thus, experiencing the utmost pain, my mind does not long for lust. Behold the purity of a being!*
>
> *"Desire for gratification of the senses (kāma) is your first army. The second is called aversion for the Holy Life (arati). The third is hunger and thirst (khuppīpāsā).*[1031] *The fourth is called craving (taṇhā). The fifth is sloth and torpor (thīna-middha). The sixth is called fear (bhīru). The seventh is doubt (vicikicchā),*[1032] *and the eighth is distraction and stubbornness (makkha-thambha). The ninth is gain (lābha), praise (siloka) and honor (sakkāra), and ill-gotten fame (yasa). The tenth is the extolling of oneself and contempt for others (attukkaṁ-sanaparavam-bhana).*
>
> *"This, Namuci, is your army, the opposing host of the Evil One. He who does not overcome that army is a coward, but he who does overcome it obtains happiness.*

[1031] Resulting from voluntary poverty.

[1032] That is, indecision as to the certainty of the goal.

> *"Do you see this muñja*[1033] *that I am wearing? I do not care about life in this world! I would rather die in battle than live in defeat. There are some ascetics and Brahmins who are not engaged in this battle — they will never know nor tread the path of the virtuous. Seeing the army all around me, with Māra riding on an elephant, I go forward into battle. Māra shall not drive me from my position. Even though the whole world, including the gods, cannot defeat that army of yours, I am going to destroy it with the power of Wisdom as I would an unbaked clay pot with a stone.*
>
> *"With my thoughts under control and well-established in mindfulness, I shall wander from country to country training many disciples. Diligent, intent, and practicing my Teachings, they will disregard you and will attain that, which having been attained, will lead them not to grief."*[1034]

Just as their wisdom (*paññā*) is always directed to the service of others, so also is their fund of energy (*viriya*). Instead of confining it to the narrow course leading to the realization of personal ends, they direct it into the open channel of activities that tend to universal happiness. Ceaselessly and untiringly, they work for others, expecting nothing in return. They are ever ready to serve others to the best of their ability.

In certain respects, *viriya* plays an even greater part than *paññā* in the achievement of the goal. In one who treads the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Effort (*sammā vāyāma* or *viriya*) suppresses the arising of evil mental states, eradicates evil mental states that have already arisen, stimulates the arising of good mental states, and maintains and perfects good mental states that have already arisen. It serves as one of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*viriya sambojjhanga*). It is one of the Four Means of Accomplishment (*viriyiddhipāda*). It is *viriya* that performs the function of the Four Modes of Right Endeavor[1035] (*sammappadhāna*). It is one of the Five Powers (*viriya-bala*) and one of the Five Spiritual Faculties (*viriyindriya*).

Viriya, therefore, may be regarded as an officer that performs nine functions. It is effort coupled with wisdom that serves as a powerful means to achieve all ends.

Patience (*Khanti*)

As important as Energy (*viriya*) is Patience (*khanti*). *Khanti* is the patient endurance of suffering inflicted upon oneself by others and forbearance in the presence of the wrongs of others.

[1033] Warriors wore a *muñja* grass crest on their heads or on their banners to indicate that they would not retreat from the battlefield.

[1034] *Sutta Nipāta*, Padhāna Sutta.

[1035] Right Endeavor is identical with the sixth step of the Noble Eightfold Path, that is, Right Effort. Right Effort is the fourfold effort that we make to overcome and avoid fresh bad actions by body, speech, and mind and the effort that we make in developing fresh actions of righteousness, inner peace, and wisdom, and in cultivating them to perfection.

Bodhisattas practice patience to such an extent that they are not provoked even when their hands and feet are cut off. In the *Khantivādi Jātaka* (no. 313), it appears that, not only did the *Bodhisatta* cheerfully endure the tortures inflicted by the drunken king, who mercilessly ordered his hands, feet, nose, and ears to be cut off, but also requited those injuries with a blessing.

Lying on the ground, in a deep pool of his own blood, with mutilated limbs, the *Bodhisatta* said:

> *"Long live the king, whose cruel hand has thus marred my body. Pure souls like mine never regard deeds such as these with anger."*

It is said, concerning their forbearance, that whenever *Bodhisattas* are harmed, they think of the aggressor thus:

> *"This person is a fellow being of mine. Intentionally or unintentionally, I myself must have been the source of provocation, or it may be due to a past evil kamma of mine. Inasmuch as it is the outcome of my own action, why should I harbor ill will towards him?"*

It may be mentioned that *Bodhisattas* are not irritated by any man's shameless conduct either. Admonishing His disciples to practice forbearance, the *Buddha* says in the Kakacūpama Sutta:[1036]

> *"Though robbers, who are highway men, should sever your limbs with a two-handled saw, yet, if you thereby defile your mind, you would be no follower of my Teaching.*
>
> *"Thus should you train yourself: unsullied shall our hearts remain. No evil word shall escape our lips. Kind and compassionate with loving heart, harboring no ill will shall we abide, enfolding even those bandits with thoughts of loving-kindness. And, proceeding forth from them, we shall abide radiating the whole world with thoughts of loving-kindness, vast, expansive, measureless, benevolent, and unified."*

Practicing patience and tolerance, instead of seeing the ugliness in others, *Bodhisattas* try to seek the good and beautiful in all.

Truthfulness (*Sacca*)

Truthfulness, or *sacca*, is the seventh Perfection. Here, *sacca* means the fulfilling of one's promise. This is one of the salient characteristics of *Bodhisattas*, for they do not

[1036] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Tatiyavagga, Kakacūpama Sutta, no. 21.

break their word. They act as they speak; they speak as they act (*yathāvādī tathākārī yathākārī tathāvādī*).

According to the *Hārita Jātaka* (no. 431), *Bodhisattas*, in the course of their life's wanderings, never utter an untruth, although, at times, they may violate the other four precepts. They do not hide the truth even to be polite.

They make truth their guide and hold it their bound duty to keep their word. They ponder well before they make a promise, but, once made, the promise is fulfilled at any cost, even that of their lives.

In the *Hiri Jātaka* (no. 363), the *Bodhisatta* advises:

> *"Be true in deed to every promise. Refuse to promise what you cannot do; wise men look askew at empty braggarts."*

The *Mahā Sutasoma Jātaka* (no. 537) recounts that the *Bodhisatta* was prepared even to sacrifice his life to fulfill a promise.

> *"Just as the morning star on high ever keeps its balanced course and through all seasons, times, and years, never swerves from its pathway, so likewise does he, in all wise speech, never swerve from the path of truth."*[1037]

Bodhisattas are trustworthy, sincere, and honest. What they think is what they say. There is perfect harmony in their thoughts, words, and deeds.

They are consistent and straightforward in all their dealings. Since they strictly adhere to their high principles, there is never the slightest trace of hypocrisy in anything they say, think, or do. There is no difference between their inner self and their outward utterances. Their private lives are in full accord with their public lives.

They do not use flattery to win the hearts of others, do not exalt themselves to win the admiration of others, and do not hide their defects or vainly exhibit their virtues. They praise those worthy of praise without malice, and they blame those deserving blame judiciously, not with contempt but out of compassion.

However, they do not always utter the truth simply for the sake of saying it. Should such an utterance not be conducive to the good and happiness of others, then, they remain silent. On the other hand, if any truth seems beneficial to others, they utter it, no matter how detrimental it may be to themselves, and they honor the word of others as they honor their own.

Determination (*Adhiṭṭhāna*)

Truthfulness (*sacca*) is followed by *adhiṭṭhāna*, which may be translated as "resolute determination." Without this firm determination, the other perfections cannot

[1037] Adapted from Warren, *Buddhism in Translations.*

be fulfilled. Thus, it is compared to the foundation of a building. This will-power forces all obstructions out of the *Bodhisatta's* path, and, no matter what may come to them, be it sickness, grief, or disaster, they never turn their eyes away from their goal.

For instance, the Bodhisatta Gotama made a firm determination to renounce His royal pleasures and gain Enlightenment. For six long years, He undertook a superhuman struggle. He had to endure manifold hardships and face innumerable difficulties. At a crucial moment, when He most needed their help, His five favorite disciples deserted Him. Yet, He did not give up His effort. His enthusiasm was redoubled. He strove on alone and eventually achieved His goal.

Bodhisattas are persons of iron determination, whose high principles cannot be shaken. Easily persuaded to do good, no one could tempt them to do anything contrary to those principles. As occasion demands, they are as soft as a flower or as hard as a rock.

Loving-kindness (*Mettā*)

The most important of all Perfections is *mettā*.[1038] There is no graceful English equivalent for *mettā*. It may be rendered as "benevolence, goodwill, friendliness, or loving-kindness," and is defined as the wish for the happiness of all beings without exception. It is this *mettā* that prompts *Bodhisattas* to renounce personal deliverance for the sake of others. They are permeated with boundless goodwill towards all beings irrespective of caste, creed, color, race, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or any other arbitrary distinction. Since they are the embodiment of universal love, they fear none, nor are they feared by any. Wild beasts in lonely jungles are their loving friends. Their very presence among them fosters their mutual friendliness. They ever cherish in their hearts boundless goodwill towards all that lives.

Mettā, in Buddhism, should be distinguished from personal affection (*pema*), or ordinary carnal love. Fear and grief come from this type of affection, but not from *mettā*.

In exercising this loving-kindness, one should not ignore oneself. *Mettā* should be extended equally towards oneself as well as towards others. The *mettā* of a Buddhist embraces the whole world, including oneself.

In the *Mahā-Dhammapāla Jātaka* (no. 385), the young *Bodhisatta* extended his loving-kindness, in equal measure, towards his cruel father, who ordered him to be tortured and killed, the wicked executioner, his loving, weeping mother, and his own humble self.

Loving-kindness possesses a mystical power, which can easily influence beings near and far. A pure heart that radiates this beneficent force is capable of transforming wild beasts into tame ones, villains into saints. This mystical power lies within the reach of all. Only a slight exertion is necessary to make it our own. As the *Buddha* said:[1039]

[1038] Sanskrit *maitrī*.
[1039] Adapted from: *Khuddaka Nikāya*: *Apadānapāḷi* 1, Buddhavaggo, verses 195—198.

"Dwelling on the mountain slopes, I drew to me lions and tigers, by the power of loving-kindness. Surrounded by lions and tigers, by panthers and buffaloes, by antelopes, stags, and boars, I dwelt in the forest. No creature was terrified of me, and neither was I afraid of any creature. The power of loving-kindness was my support. Thus, I dwelt on the mountain side."

As one loves others, so is one loved by them. No opposing forces, no hostile vibrations, no negative thoughts can affect one who is so protected by this aura of loving-kindness. With mind at peace, he lives in a heaven of his own creation. Those who come into contact with him also experience that bliss just by being in his presence. When one habitually feels loving-kindness and demonstrates it in words and deeds, even the most hard-hearted are softened. Distinctions gradually disappear, and the notion of "I" is absorbed in the "all." Indeed, there is no "I" at all. Finally, one is able to identify oneself with all (*sabbattatā*) — this is the culmination of *mettā*.

Bodhisattas extend *mettā* towards every living being and identify themselves with all that lives. It is this Buddhist *mettā* that attempts to break down all the barriers that separate one from another. To *Bodhisattas*, there is no far or near, no enemy or foreigner, no renegade or untouchable, since universal loving-kindness, realized through understanding, has established in them the brotherhood of all living beings. *Bodhisattas* are true citizens of the world, ever kind, ever friendly, and ever compassionate.

Equanimity (*Upekkhā*)

The last Perfection is *upekkhā*, or Equanimity. The Pāḷi term *upekkhā* is composed of *upa-*, which means "justly, impartially, or rightly (*yuttito*)," and *ikkha* "to see, to discern, or to view." The etymological meaning of the term is "discerning rightly, viewing justly, or looking impartially," that is, without attachment or aversion, without favor or disfavor.

Here, the term is not used in the sense of indifference or neutral feeling. The most difficult and the most essential of all Perfections is equanimity, especially for a layman who has to live in an ill-balanced world with fluctuating fortunes.

Slights and insults are the common lot of humanity. So are praise and blame, loss and gain, pain and happiness. Amidst all such vicissitudes of life, *Bodhisattas* try to stand unmoved like a firm rock, exercising perfect equanimity.

"There is an old saying, Atula — it is not just of today: 'People will blame you if you say too much; they will blame you if you say too little; they will blame you if you say just enough.' No one escapes blame in this world.

"There never was, there never will be, nor is there now anyone who receives all praise or all blame."[1040]

[1040] *Dhammapada*, XVII, Anger, verses 227—228.

In times of happiness and adversity, amidst praise and blame, *Bodhisattas* are even-balanced. Like a lion that does not tremble at any sound, they are not perturbed by the poisoned darts of uncurbed tongues. Like the wind that does not cling to the meshes of a net, they are not attached to the illusory pleasures of this changing world. Like a lotus that is unsoiled by the mud from which it springs, they live unaffected by worldly temptations, ever calm, serene, and peaceful.

Furthermore, *Bodhisattas*, as a result of practicing *upekkhā*, treat all justly and impartially, without being influenced by desire (*chanda*), hatred (*dosa*), fear (*bhaya*), and ignorance (*moha*).

It will be seen from the above Perfections that Bodhisattahood is, in its entirety, a course of self-sacrifice, discipline, renunciation, deep insight, energy, forbearance, truthfulness, determination, boundless loving-kindness, and perfect mental equilibrium.

Modes of Conduct

In addition to these ten Perfections, *Bodhisattas* have to practice three modes of conduct (*cariyā*):

1. *Buddhi cariyā*, doing good with wisdom — not ignoring self-development;
2. *Nātattha cariyā*, working for the betterment of those who are near and dear;
3. *Lokattha cariyā*, working for the betterment of the whole world.

The second mode of conduct does not mean nepotism, but working to promote the well-being and spiritual development of those near and dear without any favoritism.

Thus, practicing the ten Perfections (*pāramī* or *pāramitā*) to the highest degree possible, while developing the three modes of conduct, *Bodhisattas* traverse the tempest-tossed sea of *saṁsāra*, driven hither and thither by the irresistible force of *kamma*, manifesting themselves at different times in multifarious births.

At one time, they come into being as a mighty Sakka or as a radiant *deva*, at another time, as a human being, high or low, again, as an animal, and so on, until, finally, they seek birth in the Tusita Heaven, having consummated the Perfections. There, they abide, awaiting the opportune moment to appear on earth as a *Sammā Sambuddha*, a Fully Enlightened *Buddha*.

It is not correct to think that *Bodhisattas* purposely manifest themselves in such various forms in order to acquire universal experience. No person is exempt from the inexorable law of *kamma*, which alone determines the future birth of individuals, except for *Arahants* and *Buddhas*, who have put an end to all rebirth in a fresh existence.

Due to their intrinsic merit, *Bodhisattas*, however, possess some special powers. If, for instance, they are born in a Brahmā Realm, where the span of life extends for countless eons, by exercising their will-power, they cease to live in that sphere and are reborn in another, more congenial place, where they may serve the world and practice the Perfections.

Apart from this special kind of voluntary rebirth, the *Jātaka* Commentary states that there are eighteen states in which *Bodhisattas*, as a result of their potential karmic force, accumulated in the course of their wanderings in *saṁsāra*, are never reborn. For instance, they are never born blind or deaf, nor do they become an absolute misbeliever (*niyata micchādiṭṭhi*) who deny *kamma* and its effects. If they are born as an animal, it will not be larger than an elephant or smaller than a snipe. They may suffer in the ordinary states of misery (*apāya*) but are never destined to the nethermost states of woe (*avīci*). Also, *Bodhisattas* do not seek birth in the Pure Abodes (*Suddhāvāsa*), where *Anāgāmīs* are reborn, nor in the Formless Realms, where one is deprived of the opportunity to be of service to others.

It might be asked: Are *Bodhisattas* aware that they are aspiring to Buddhahood in the course of their births? Sometimes they are, and sometimes they are not. According to certain *Jātaka* tales, it appears that, on some occasions, the Bodhisatta Gotama was fully conscious of His striving for Buddhahood. The *Visayha Seṭṭhi Jātaka* (no. 340) may be cited as an example. In this particular story, Sakka questioned the *Bodhisatta* as to why He was exceptionally generous. He replied that it was not for the sake of worldly power but for the sole purpose of attaining Supreme Buddhahood. In certain births, as in the case of Jotipāla,[1041] He was not only unaware of his high aspiration, but also abused the noble Teacher Buddha Kassapa at the mere utterance of the sacred word "*Buddha*." It may be mentioned that it was from this very *Buddha* that He obtained his last revelation (*vivaraṇa*).

We ourselves may be *Bodhisattas*, who have dedicated our lives to the noble purpose of serving the world. One need not think that the *Bodhisatta* Path is reserved only for supermen. What one has done, another can do, given the necessary effort and enthusiasm. Let us, too, endeavor to work disinterestedly for the good of ourselves and all other beings, having for our object in life the noble ideal of service and perfection. Let us serve to be perfect and be perfect to serve. ■

Further Reading

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[1041] *Majjhima Nikāya*, Rājavagga, Ghaṭikāra Sutta, no. 81.

51

The Sublime States (Brahmavihāra)

"There, O Monks, the Monk pervades first one direction, then the second, then the third, then the fourth, above, below, round about, in every quarter with all-embracing loving-kindness, or with compassion, or with sympathetic joy, or with equanimity. And, identifying himself with all [sentient beings], he pervades the entire universe with all-embracing loving-kindness, with heart grown great, wide, deep, boundless, free from hatred and anger ...."[1042]

The Nature of Man

Man is a marvelous being with inconceivable potentialities. Latent in him are both saintly characteristics and criminal tendencies. They may rise to the surface at unexpected moments in disconcerting strength. We cannot trace from whence they came. We only know that they are dormant in all in varying degrees.

Within the powerful mind in this complex being called "man" are also found a storehouse of virtue and a rubbish heap of evil. With the development of the respective characteristics, man may become either a blessing or a curse to his fellow beings.

Those who wish to be great, noble, and serviceable, who wish to sublimate themselves and serve humanity both by example and by precept, and who wish to avail themselves of this golden opportunity afforded by being born as human beings, endeavor their best to remove the latent vices and to cultivate the dormant virtues.

To dig up precious gems embedded in the earth, men spend enormous sums of money and make laborious efforts, and sometimes even sacrifice their lives. But, to dig up the valuable treasures latent in man, only persistent effort and enduring patience are necessary. Even the poorest man or woman can accomplish this task, for wealth is not a prerequisite to the accumulation of transcendental treasure.

Every vice latent in man possesses its opposite sterling virtue. Yet, it is strange that the vices seem to be almost natural and spontaneous, while the opposite sterling virtues do not appear to be as natural and spontaneous, though they are still within the reach of all.

[1042] These stereotypical words are found again and again throughout the *suttas*.

One powerful destructive vice in man is anger (*dosa*). The sweet virtue that subdues this evil force and uplifts man is loving-kindness (*mettā*).

Cruelty (*hiṁsā*) is another vice that is responsible for many horrors and atrocities prevalent in the world. Compassion (*karuṇā*) is the antidote to cruelty.

Jealousy (*issā*) is another vice that poisons one's system and leads to unhealthy rivalries and dangerous competitions. The most effective remedy for this poison is appreciative, or sympathetic, joy (*muditā*).

There are two other universal characteristics that upset the mental equipoise of man. They are: (1) attachment to the pleasurable and (2) aversion to the non-pleasurable. These two opposing forces can be eliminated by developing equanimity (*upekkhā*).

In Pāḷi, these four sterling virtues are collectively termed *brahmavihāra*, which may be rendered in English as "Sublime States," "Divine Abodes," or "Modes of Sublime Conduct."

These virtues tend to elevate man. They make one divine in this life itself. They can transform man into a superman. If all try to cultivate these virtues, irrespective of creed, color, race, or gender, the earth can be transformed into a paradise, where all can live in perfect peace and harmony as ideal citizens of the world.

The four sublime virtues are also termed "illimitables" (*appamaññā*). They are so called because they find no barrier or limit and should be extended towards all beings without exception. They embrace all living beings, including animals.

Regardless of one's religious beliefs, one can cultivate these sweet virtues and be a blessing to oneself and others.

Mettā

The first sublime state is *mettā*. It means that which softens one's heart, or the state of a true friend. It is defined as the sincere wish for the welfare and genuine happiness of all living beings without exception. It is also explained as the friendly disposition, for a genuine friend sincerely wishes for the welfare of his friends.

The *Buddha* advises:

> *"Just as a mother protects her only child, even at the risk of her own life, so should one cultivate boundless loving-kindness towards all living beings."*

It is not the passionate love of the mother towards her child that is stressed here, but her sincere wish for the genuine happiness of her child.

Mettā is neither carnal love nor personal affection, for grief inevitably arises from both. Nor is *mettā* mere neighborliness, for it makes no distinction between neighbors and others. *Mettā* is not mere universal brotherhood either, for it embraces all living beings, including animals, who need even greater protection and compassion since they are helpless. Political brotherhood, on the other hand, is confined only to those who share similar political views, such as the partial brotherhood of Democrats, Republicans,

Liberals, Conservatives, Libertarians, Socialists, Communists, and so forth, and has nothing to do with *mettā*.

Racial "brotherhood" and national "brotherhood" are restricted only to those of the same race and the same nation. Some racists exalt their own race so much that they sometimes ruthlessly torture and kill innocent men, women, and children simply because they belong to a different race. Those of a different complexion are sometimes viewed with suspicion and fear. Very often, to assert their own alleged racial superiority, they resort to brutal warfare, killing millions by mercilessly raining bombs from the sky above. The pathetic incidents of World War II, the systematic slaughter of native Americans, the displacement and subjugation of aboriginal Australians, and the now-abandoned apartheid system in South Africa are striking examples that must never be forgotten by mankind.

Within the borders of many modern nations, there exist minorities who belong to different races or nationalities, who speak different languages, and/or who practice different religions. Quite often, these minorities are so oppressed that they are not even permitted to enjoy basic human rights. The narrow-minded oppressors are to be pitied — *mettā* excludes none.

Mettā is not religious brotherhood either. Owing to the sad limitations of so-called "religious brotherhood," human heads have been severed without the slightest compunction; sincere, outspoken men and women have been roasted and burned alive; many atrocities have been perpetuated that baffle description; cruel wars have been waged that mar the pages of world history. Unfortunately, these are not things of the past — they are still going on in parts of the world: the never-ending hostility between Hindus and Moslems on the Indian subcontinent, the recent bloody civil war between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland, the persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran, the long-standing conflict between Jews and Moslems in the Near East, the ethnic cleansing of Moslems and other religious minorities in the former Yugoslavia, the torture and killing of Tibetans and the systematic suppression of Buddhism and other religions in the People's Republic of China, the atrocities committed in Darfur, Cambodia, and Rwanda may be cited as a few contemporary examples. If, on account of religious views, people of different faiths cannot meet on common ground and treat each other like brothers and sisters, then, surely, the missions of the great religious teachers have pitifully failed.

The low esteem in which women have been and are still held in many parts of the world, so extreme in some cases that they are denied basic rights, physically abused, raped, and even callously killed on occasion, is inexcusable by any criterion.

Even in this supposedly "enlightened" modern age, the overt hostility directed towards and shameless mistreatment of those having a sexual orientation different from the majority by many governments, political and religious leaders, and even ordinary citizens stands out as an injustice that defies logic, decency, compassion, and any notion of equality, respect, and fairness.

Mettā transcends all. It is limitless in scope and range. It has no barriers. It makes no discrimination. It enables one to regard the whole world as one's homeland and all as one's fellow beings.

Just as the sun sheds its rays on all without any distinction, even so, sublime *mettā* bestows its sweet blessings equally on the pleasant and the unpleasant, on the rich and the poor, on the high and the low, on the vicious and the virtuous, on men and women, and on human and animal.

Such was the boundless *mettā* of the *Buddha*, who worked for the welfare and happiness of those who revered Him as well as those who despised Him and even attempted to harm and kill Him.

The *Buddha* extended *mettā* equally towards His own son Rāhula, His adversary Devadatta, His attendant Ānanda, His admirers, and His opponents.

Loving-kindness should be extended in equal measure towards oneself as towards friend, foe, and neutral alike. Suppose a bandit were to approach a person traveling through a forest with a close friend, a neutral person, and an enemy. Next, suppose that the bandit were to demand that one of them be offered as a victim. If the traveler were to say that he himself should be taken, he would have no *mettā* towards himself. If he were to say that any one of the other three persons should be taken, then he would have no *mettā* towards them.

Such is the characteristic of real *mettā*. In exercising this boundless loving-kindness, one should not ignore oneself. This subtle point should not be misunderstood, for self-sacrifice is another sweet virtue, and egolessness is yet another higher virtue. The culmination of this *mettā* is the identification of oneself with all beings (*sabbattatā*), making no differentiation between oneself and others. The so-called "I" or "ego" is lost in the whole. Separation evaporates. Oneness is realized.

There is no proper English equivalent for this graceful Pāḷi term *mettā*. "Good-will," "loving-kindness," "benevolence," and "universal love" have been suggested as possible renderings.

The antithesis of *mettā* is anger, ill will, hatred, or aversion. *Mettā* cannot co-exist with anger or vengeful conduct. The *Buddha* states:

> *"'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me' — those who dwell on such thoughts will never become free from hatred.*
>
> *"'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me' — those who do not dwell on such thoughts will truly become free from hatred.*
>
> *"Returning hatred with hatred will never bring hatred to an end in this world; only by replacing hatred with love will hatred come to an end. This is an ancient and eternal law.*
>
> *"People do not understand that quarrelsome behavior leads only to self-destruction; for those who realize this, quarrels quickly come to an end."*[1043]

Mettā not only tends to conquer anger but also does not tolerate hateful thoughts towards others. He who is filled with *mettā* never thinks of harming others, nor does he disparage or condemn others. Such a person is neither afraid of others, nor does he instill fear in others.

[1043] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verses 3—6.

A subtle indirect enemy assails *mettā* in the guise of a friend. It is selfish affection (*pema*), for unguarded *mettā* may sometimes turn into lust. This indirect enemy resembles a person who lurks afar in the jungles or hills to cause harm to another. Grief springs from selfish affection but not from *mettā*.

This delicate point should not be misunderstood. Parents surely cannot avoid having affection for their children and children for their parents; husbands for their wives and wives for their husbands. Such affection is quite natural. This world cannot exist without affection. The point to be clarified here is that unselfish *mettā* is not synonymous with ordinary affection.

A benevolent attitude is the chief characteristic of *mettā*. He who practices *mettā* is constantly interested in promoting the welfare of others. He seeks the good and beautiful in all but not the ugliness in others.

Attendant Blessings of Mettā

1. He who practices *mettā* sleeps happily. Since he goes to sleep with a light heart free from hatred, he naturally falls asleep at once. This fact is clearly demonstrated by those who are full of loving-kindness. They are fast asleep almost as soon as they close their eyes.

2. Inasmuch as he goes to sleep with a loving heart, he awakens with an equally loving heart. Benevolent and compassionate persons often rise from bed with smiling faces.

3. Even in sleep, loving persons are not disturbed by bad dreams or nightmares. Since they are full of love during their waking hours, they are peaceful in their sleeping hours as well. Either they fall into deep sleep or have pleasant dreams.

4. He becomes dear to his fellow beings. As he loves others, so do others love him. When a person looks into a mirror with a smiling face, a similar face will greet him. If, on the contrary, he looks with an angry face, he will see a similar reflection. The outside world reacts to one in the same way that one acts towards the world. One full of faults himself is likely to dwell on the faults of others, ignoring the good in them. Why should we see only the ugliness in others when there is evil in the best of us and good in the worst of us? It would be a source of pleasure to all if we could focus on the good and beautiful in all instead of on the bad and the ugly.

5. He who practices *mettā* is dear to non-humans as well. Animals are also attracted to him. Radiating their loving-kindness, many ascetics live in wild forests amidst ferocious beasts without being harmed by them.

6. Owing to the power of *mettā*, one becomes immune to poison and so forth unless one is subject to some inexorable *kamma*. Since *mettā* is a constructive, healthy

force, it has the power to counteract hostile influence. Just as hateful thoughts can produce toxic effects in the system, even so, loving thoughts can produce healthy physical effects. It is stated that a very generous and devout woman named Suppiyā, who had a wound in her thigh, was healed on seeing the *Buddha*. The peaceful thoughts of the *Buddha* and those of the woman combined to produce this healing effect. When the *Buddha* visited His birthplace for the first time, His son Rāhula, who was only seven years old, approached Him and spontaneously remarked: "O Ascetic, even your shadow is pleasing to me." The child was so permeated by the *Buddha's mettā* that he deeply felt its magnetic power.

7. Invisible deities protect one because of the power of one's *mettā*.

8. *Mettā* leads to quick mental concentration. Since the mind is not disturbed by hostile thoughts, one-pointedness can be gained with ease. With mind at peace, one will live in a heaven of one's own creation. Even those who come into contact with such a one will also experience that bliss.

9. *Mettā* tends to beautify one's facial expression. The face, as a rule, reflects the state of the mind. When one gets angry, the heart beats several times faster than the normal rate. Blood rushes up to the face, which then turns red or darker, depending upon one's complexion. At times, a person's face can become repulsive to look at. Loving thoughts, on the contrary, gladden the heart. The face then presents a lovable appearance. It is stated that, when the *Buddha* reflected on the causal relations (*paṭṭhāna*) after His Enlightenment, His heart was so pacified that rays of different hues emanated from His body.

10. A person imbued with *mettā* dies peacefully, inasmuch as he harbors no thoughts of hatred towards anyone. Even after death, his serene face reflects his peaceful death.

11. Since a person filled with *mettā* dies happily, he will subsequently be reborn in a blissful state. If he has gained the *jhānas* (Absorptions), he will be reborn in a Brahmā Realm.

The Power of Mettā

Besides these inevitable worldly blessings, *mettā* possesses a magnetic power. It can produce a good influence on others even at a distance and can attract others to oneself.

Once, when the *Buddha* visited a certain city, many distinguished nobles came to welcome Him, among whom was a nobleman named Roja, who was a friend of Venerable Ānanda. Seeing him, Venerable Ānanda said:

"It is kind of you, Roja, to have come to welcome the Buddha."

To which Roja replied:

> *"No, Venerable Sir, it is not out of any reverence towards the Buddha that I have come to greet Him. We agreed among ourselves that whoever would not go to greet the Buddha would be fined five hundred gold coins. It is through fear of the fine that I have come here to welcome the Buddha."*

Venerable Ānanda was displeased with what he had heard. Therefore, he approached the *Buddha* and implored Him to preach the *Dhamma* to Roja. The *Buddha* instantly radiated *mettā* towards Roja and retired to His chamber.

Roja's body was saturated with the *mettā* of the *Buddha*. He was electrified, so to say, with the magnetic power of the *Buddha's* irresistible love. Just as a calf would run after its mother, he ran from cell to cell in the monastery inquiring where the *Buddha* was. The Monks directed him to the *Buddha's* chamber. He knocked at the door. Thereupon, the *Buddha* opened the door and invited him to come in. In he went, saluted the *Buddha*, heard the doctrine, and became a convert. Such is the magnetic power of *mettā*, which everyone can exercise according to his ability.

On another occasion, an intoxicated elephant was driven towards the *Buddha* in an effort to kill Him. The *Buddha* calmly radiated His love towards the elephant and subdued it.

A beautiful story may be cited to show how the *Bodhisatta*, as a boy, extended his boundless *mettā* when his own father ordered him to be killed. Young though he was, the *Bodhisatta* thought to himself:

> *"Here is a golden opportunity for me to practice mettā. My father stands before me, my good mother is weeping, the executioner is ready to chop off my hands and feet. I, the victim, am in the center. I must love all four in equal measure without any distinction. May my good father not incur any suffering because of this ruthless act! May I become a Buddha in the future!"*

In one of his previous births, the *Bodhisatta* was once practicing the virtue of patience in a royal park. The king, a drunkard, meaning to test his patience, ordered the executioner to beat him and cut off his hands and feet. Still, the *Bodhisatta* practiced patience. The irritated king then kicked him in the chest. Lying in a pool of blood, almost on the verge of death, the *Bodhisatta* blessed the king and wished him long life saying that men like him never get angry.

A *Bhikkhu* is expected to practice *mettā* to such an extent that he is forbidden to dig or cause to dig in the ground lest insects and other minute creatures be harmed or killed.

The high standard of *mettā* expected from a *Bhikkhu* can be understood by the following admonition of the *Buddha*:

"If bandits sever your limbs with a two-handled saw, and if you entertain hatred in your heart, you will not be a follower of my Teaching."

Such enduring patience is extremely difficult. Nonetheless, that is the high ethical standard the *Buddha* expects from His followers.

The *Buddha* Himself has set the noble example:

"Patiently, I shall bear harsh words directed at me, as an elephant bears arrows shot from a bow on the battlefield. Alas, most people are undisciplined."[1044]

The chaotic, war-weary, restless world of today, where the nations are arming themselves to their teeth, frightened of one another, and where human life is endangered by nuclear weapons that may be released at any moment, is sorely in need of this universal loving-kindness so that all may live in one world in perfect peace and harmony like brothers and sisters.

Is it practically possible to exercise *mettā* when one is threatened with devastating bombs and other destructive weapons? Well, what can powerless people do when such bombs rain from above? Can they avert such a catastrophe? Buddhist *mettā* is the only answer to such deadly weapons when one is faced with inexorable death. If all warlike nations of the world could be prevailed upon to substitute this spiritual *mettā* for the destructive weapons of materialism and rule the world not with might and force but with right and love, then only would there be genuine peace and happiness in this world.

Leaving the almost unsolvable major issues aside, it is advisable to be concerned with oneself and the rest of mankind in cultivating this sweet virtue of *mettā* to the best of one's ability.

How to Practice Mettā

A few useful hints are given below on how to practice meditation on loving-kindness.[1045]

Mettā should be practiced first towards oneself. In doing so, a person should charge his mind and body with positive thoughts of peace and happiness. He should think how he could be peaceful and happy, free from suffering, worry, and anger. He then becomes the embodiment of loving-kindness. Shielded by loving-kindness, he cuts off all hostile emotions and negative thoughts. He returns good for evil and love for anger. He becomes ever tolerant and tries his best not to let hatred, anger, ill will, or aversion arise. Himself beaming with happiness, he injects happiness into others, not

[1044] *Dhammapada*, XXIII, The Elephant, verse 320.

[1045] The technical aspects of practicing loving-kindness meditation, as well as the other *brahmavihāra* meditations, is contained in Paravahera Vairañāna Mahāthera, *Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice: A General Exposition according to the Pāḷi Canon of the Theravāda School*. (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society [3rd edition 1987]), pp. 263—313.

only inwardly but also outwardly, by putting *mettā* into practice in the course of his daily life.

When he is full of peace and free from thoughts of hatred, anger, ill will, and aversion, it is easy for him to radiate loving-kindness towards others. What he does not possess, he cannot give to others. Before he tries to make others happy, he should first be happy himself. He should know the ways and means to make himself happy.

Next, he radiates loving-kindness towards all those near and dear to him, both individually and collectively, wishing them peace and happiness and freedom from suffering, disease, worry, and anger.

After diffusing thoughts of loving-kindness towards his relatives and friends, he then radiates thoughts of loving-kindness towards neutral beings. Just as he wishes peace and happiness for himself and for those near and dear to him, likewise, he sincerely wishes for the peace and happiness of those towards whom he has neutral feelings, wishing them freedom from suffering, disease, worry, and anger. Finally, though this may be somewhat difficult, he should radiate *mettā* in the same way towards those (if any) who are hostile to him, that is to say, his enemies. If, by practicing *mettā*, he could adopt a friendly attitude towards those who are hostile to him, his achievement would be more heroic and commendable. As the *Buddha* advises: "Amidst those who hate, let him live free from hatred."

Starting from himself, he should gradually extend *mettā* towards all beings (including animals), until he has identified himself with all, making no distinction whatsoever between himself and others. He merges himself in the whole universe and is one with all. He is no longer dominated by egoistic feelings. He transcends all forms of separatism. No longer confining himself to set ways of thinking and reacting, no longer influenced by prejudices of any kind, he can regard the whole world as his homeland and all as fellow beings in the ocean of life.

Karuṇā

The second virtue that uplifts man is compassion (*karuṇā*). *Karuṇā* is defined as that which makes the hearts of the good quiver when others are subject to suffering, or that which dissipates the suffering of others. Its chief characteristic is the wish to remove the suffering of others.

The hearts of compassionate persons are even softer than flowers. They do not and cannot rest until they relieve the suffering of others. At times, so great is their compassion that they even go to the extent of sacrificing their lives in order to alleviate the sufferings of others. The story of the *Vyāghrī Jātaka*,[1046] where the *Bodhisatta* sacrificed his life to save a starving tigress and her cubs, may be cited as an example.

[1046] This is a Mahāyāna text. See Chapter 50, p. 716, of this book for details.

It is compassion that compels one to serve others. A truly compassionate person does not live for himself but for others. His motives are purely altruistic — he merely seeks opportunities to serve others, expecting nothing in return, not even gratitude.

Who Needs Compassion?

There are many among us who deserve our compassion. The poor and the needy, the sick and the helpless, the lonely and the destitute, the ignorant and the vicious, the impure and the undisciplined are some who demand the compassion of kind-hearted, noble-minded men and women.

Some countries are materially rich but spiritually poor, while others are spiritually rich but materially poor. Both these conditions have to be taken into consideration by the materially rich and the spiritually rich.

It is the paramount duty of the wealthy to come to the aid of the poor, who, unfortunately, lack many of the necessities of life. Surely, those who have in abundance can give their surplus to the poor and the needy without inconveniencing themselves.

Once, a young student removed the door curtain in his house and gave it to a poor person, telling his good mother that the door does not feel the cold, but the poor certainly do. Such a kind-hearted attitude in young men and women is highly commendable.

It is gratifying to note that some wealthy countries have formed themselves into various philanthropic bodies to help underdeveloped countries. Charitable organizations have also been established in various countries to give assistance to the poor and the needy. Various religious bodies also perform charitable deeds in their own way. Homes for the aged, orphanages, and other similar charitable institutions, food for the hungry, and medicine for the sick, are desperately needed in underdeveloped countries.

The problem of beggars has still to be solved in some countries, where begging has become a profession. Out of compassion for the unfortunate beggars, this problem has to be solved satisfactorily by the respective governments, inasmuch as the very existence of beggars is a national disgrace. Even in wealthy countries, there is a growing population of homeless people who need help.

Since those who are materially rich should have compassion for those who are materially poor and try to alleviate their misery, it is the duty of the spiritually rich, too, to have compassion on the spiritually poor and uplift them spiritually, even though they may be materially rich — wealth alone cannot give genuine happiness. Peace of mind can be gained not by material treasures but by spiritual treasures. There are many in this world who are badly in need of substantial spiritual assistance, which is not easily accomplished, since the spiritually poor far exceed the materially poor numerically, being found among both the materially rich and the materially poor.

Even more than poverty, disease prevails throughout the world. Many are physically sick, while others are mentally sick. Medical science has provided many effective treatments for the former but not for the latter, who often languish in mental hospitals.

There are causes for both physical and mental illnesses. Compassionate men and women must try to remove the causes if they wish to produce an effective cure.

Effective measures have been employed by various nations to prevent and cure diseases not only of mankind, but also of animals. But much more needs to be done. In many cases, stubbornness, prejudice, incompetence, corruption, and lack of initiative, not to mention lack of money, have stifled efforts to eradicate diseases.

The *Buddha* set a noble example by attending on the sick Himself and exhorting His disciples to do likewise, as illustrated by the following story:

> *Now, a certain Bhikkhu was once sick with dysentery, and he lay fouled in his own urine and excrement. Inasmuch as the Blessed One was going the round of the lodgings with Venerable Ānanda as his attendant Monk, he came to that Bhikkhu's dwelling. When he saw him lying where he was, he went up to him and said: "What is your sickness, Bhikkhu?"*
>
> *"It is dysentery, Blessed One."*
>
> *"But, Bhikkhu, have you no attendant?"*
>
> *"No, Blessed One."*
>
> *"Why do the Bhikkhus not look after you, Bhikkhu?"*
>
> *"I am not able to help the other Bhikkhus, Lord; that is why they do not help me."*
>
> *Then, the Blessed One said to Venerable Ānanda: "Ānanda, go and fetch some water. Let us wash this Bhikkhu."*
>
> *"Even so, Lord," replied Venerable Ānanda, and he brought some water. The Blessed One poured out the water, and Venerable Ānanda washed the Bhikkhu. Then, the Blessed One took him by the head, and Venerable Ānanda took him by the feet, and they raised him up and put him on a bed.*
>
> *With this as the occasion and this as the reason, the Blessed One summoned the Bhikkhus and asked them: "Bhikkhus, is there a sick Bhikkhu in a certain dwelling?"*
>
> *"There is, Blessed One."*
>
> *"What is that Bhikkhu's illness?"*
>
> *"He has dysentery, Lord."*
>
> *"Has he anyone to look after him?"*
>
> *"No, Blessed One."*
>
> *"Why do the Bhikkhus not look after him?"*
>
> *"Lord, that Bhikkhu is not able to help the other Bhikkhus; that is why they do not help him."*
>
> *"Bhikkhus, you have neither mother nor father to look after you. If you do not look after each other, who will look after you? Let him who would look after me look after one who is sick. If he has a preceptor, his preceptor should, as long as he lives, look after him until his recovery. His teacher, if he has one, should do likewise. Or his co-resident, or his pupil, or one who has the same preceptor, or*

one who has the same teacher. If he has none of these, the Sangha should look after him. Not to do so is an offence of wrongdoing." [1047]

Some selfless doctors render free service towards the alleviation of suffering. Some expend their whole time and energy caring for the poor and the needy, even at the risk of their own lives.

Hospitals and free clinics have become a blessing to humanity, but more are needed so that the poor may benefit from them. In underdeveloped countries, the poor suffer through lack of adequate medical facilities. The sick have to be carried for miles with great inconvenience to the nearest hospital or dispensary for medical treatment. Sometimes, they die on the way. Pregnant women suffer most. Hospitals, dispensaries, maternity wards, etc. are essential needs in backward village areas.

The lowly and the destitute deserve the compassion of wealthy men and women. Sometimes, servants and workers are not well paid, well fed, well clothed, and, more often than not, are not well treated. Justice is not meted out to them. They are neglected and are powerless, inasmuch as there is nobody to defend them. Glaring instances of inhuman cruelty receive publicity only in some exceptional cases. Many such cases are never reported. More often than not, these unfortunate victims have no other alternative but to bear their suffering meekly.

The vicious, the wicked, and the ignorant deserve compassion even more than those who suffer physically, since they are mentally and spiritually sick. They should not be condemned and despised but sympathized with for their failings and defects. Though a mother has equal compassion towards all her children, still she may have more compassion towards one who is sick. Even so, greater compassion should be extended towards the spiritually sick, since their sickness ruins their character.

We must understand that greatness is latent in all, however wicked they may be. Perhaps one appropriate word at the right moment may change the whole outlook of a person.

The Emperor Asoka perpetrated many crimes in the early part of his reign, so much so that he was stigmatized "Asoka the Wicked." Later, the words from a young novice — "Diligence is the path to the deathless" — produced such a change in Asoka that he became known as "Asoka the Righteous" (*Dharmāśoka*).

The *Buddha's* advice is to shun the company of the foolish and the wicked and to associate with "noble friends, noble companions, noble associates:"

36. *"Attachment arises from companionship, dissatisfaction proceeds from attachment. Observing the perils resulting from attachment, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."*

45. *"If one finds a wise friend, a companion living in accordance with good virtue, prudent and having conquered all dangers, then live with him happily*

[1047] *Vinaya Piṭaka*, Khandhaka, Mahāvaga.

and mindfully."

46. *"If one does not find a wise friend, a companion living in accordance with wise virtues, and prudent, then, like a ruler who has abandoned his conquered country, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."*

47. *"Certainly, we praise the acquisition of friendship and friends — those who are either higher or equal in attainment or development should be associated with. Not finding such friends, enjoying blameless food, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."*

75. *"Many keep companionship with each other for the sake of self-advantage. Today, it is difficult to find friends free from ulterior motives. They are clever enough to obtain personal advantages and, therefore, are despicable. Knowing this, let one live alone like a rhinoceros horn."*[1048]

Once, the Venerable Ānanda, who was deeply devoted to the Master, spoke of noble friendship as being "half of the holy life," believing he had duly praised its worth. The *Buddha* replied: "Do not say so, Ānanda, do not say so: it is the entire holy life to have noble friends, noble companions, noble associates."[1049]

"Long is the night to those who cannot sleep; long is the road to the weary. Long is the cycle of birth and death[1050] *to those who do not know the Dhamma.*

"If, as you travel through life, you do not find another whose understanding of the Dhamma is either equal to or greater than your own,[1051] *walk on alone.*[1052] *One cannot advance by associating with those lacking wisdom.*[1053]

"The immature[1054] *think, 'These children are mine; this wealth is mine.' They cannot even call themselves their own, much less their children or wealth.*

[1048] *Khuddaka Nikāya*, *Sutta Nipāta*, Rhinoceros Horn.

[1049] *Saṁyutta Nikāya*.

[1050] *Saṁsāra*, literally, "wandering again and again." It is the ocean of life or existence. *Saṁsāra* is defined as the unbroken flow of the stream of aggregates, elements, and sense-faculties.

[1051] Someone equal to or better than one in the qualities of virtue, integrity, and wisdom.

[1052] Coming across one's better, one will grow in virtue, integrity, and wisdom; coming across one's equal, one will not degenerate; but living and sharing one's daily life with an inferior causes one to degenerate in virtue and the like.

[1053] Out of compassion (*karuṇā*), to work for their betterment, one may associate with them. In other words, if it is possible to help such people grow in virtue, integrity, and wisdom without expecting anything from them in return, then one may associate with them. But, if it is not possible to help them, one should be firmly set on being by oneself and living by oneself in every mode of deportment.

[1054] *Bāla* — this is often translated as "fools" or "the foolish," sometimes even as "childish persons." It is the opposite of *paṇḍita* "(the) wise" and refers to those who are ignorant, stupid, and mentally dull. Here, it is translated as "the immature." Fools are not likely to change their behavior, while someone who is simply

"The immature who know they are immature have a little wisdom. But the immature who look on themselves as wise are utterly foolish.

"Those who are immature cannot understand the Dhamma even if they spend their whole life with the wise. How can the spoon know the taste of soup?

"If the mature[1055] *spend even a short time with the wise, they will understand the Dhamma, just as the tongue knows the taste of soup."*[1056]

This does not mean, however, that the righteous should not associate with the foolish in order to teach them, guide them, and uplift them. People may avoid those who suffer from contagious diseases, but compassionate physicians attend on them in order to heal them. Otherwise, they might die. In the same way, the wicked may die spiritually if the good are not tolerant and compassionate towards them.

As a rule, the *Buddha* went in search of the poor, the ignorant, and the vicious, but the good and the virtuous came in search of Him.

Like *mettā* (loving-kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion) should also be extended without limit towards all suffering and helpless beings, including both animals and humans.

To deny the rights and privileges of any individual on the basis of caste, class, religion, race, color, nationality, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, education, economic or social status, citizenship, or any other arbitrary characteristic is inhuman and cruel. To feast on the flesh of animals by killing or causing them to be killed is not compassionate. To rain bombs from above and ruthlessly destroy millions of men, women, and children is the worst form of cruelty that deluded man has ever perpetrated.

Today, this pitiless, vengeful world has sacrificed the most precious thing on earth — life — at the altar of brute force. Where, indeed, is compassion?

The world today needs compassionate men and women to banish violence and cruelty from the face of the earth.

It should be noted that Buddhist compassion does not consist in mere shedding of tears and the like, for the indirect enemy of compassion is passionate grief (*domanassa*).

Compassion embraces all sorrow-stricken beings, while loving-kindness embraces all living beings, whether happy or sorrowful.

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immature, given time and experience, can always learn and grow. They are spiritually immature inasmuch as they do not know what is good for this world and the world beyond, they are not able to put an end to the whirl of *saṁsāra*, and they do not know the noble *Dhamma* of the *Buddha*. Due to ignorance (*avijjā*), they act foolishly, creating fresh *kamma*, leading to repeated rebirth in cyclic existence.

[1055] If one associates with a wise person even for a short time, then such a one, learning from the wise person and inquiring, will come, little by little, to understand the *Dhamma*. Thereafter, through deepening one's knowledge and putting what one has learned into practice, striving on with diligence, one will advance like a racehorse and will, inevitably, transcend the world.

[1056] *Dhammapada*, V, Fools (The Immature), verses 60—65.

Muditā

The third sublime virtue is *muditā*. *Muditā* is not mere sympathy but sympathetic, or appreciative, joy, which tends to destroy jealousy, its direct enemy.

One devastating force that endangers our whole constitution is jealously. Very often, there are those who cannot bear to see or hear the successful achievements of others. They rejoice over the failures of others but cannot tolerate their successes. Instead of praising and congratulating the successful, they try to ruin, condemn, and vilify them. In one way, *muditā* is concerned more with oneself than with others inasmuch as it tends to eradicate jealousy, which ruins oneself. On the other hand, it aids others as well, since one who practices *muditā* will not try to hinder the progress and welfare of others.

It is quite easy to rejoice over the success of those near and dear to oneself, but it is rather difficult to do so over the success of one's adversaries or enemies. Indeed, the majority not only find it difficult but also do not and cannot rejoice. They take delight in creating every possible obstacle in order to ruin their adversaries. They have even gone to the extent of poisoning, crucifying, and assassinating their opponents.

Socrates was poisoned, Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., were shot, Jesus was crucified, Dietrich Bonhoeffer died in a concentration camp. Such is the nature of the wicked and deluded world.

The practice of *mettā* and *karuṇā* is easier than the practice of *muditā*, which demands great personal effort and strong willpower.

Do the underdeveloped nations rejoice over the prosperity of the industrialized nations? Does one nation rejoice over the military strength of another nation? Does even one religious sect rejoice over the influence of another sect? Is one race happy over the prosperity of another race? On the contrary, one religion is jealous of another religion, one part of the globe is jealous of another part of the globe, one institution is jealous of another institution, one business firm is jealous of another business firm, one family is jealous of another family, the poor and the needy are jealous of the rich and powerful, one race is jealous of another race — sometimes, even one brother or sister is jealous of another brother or sister.

This is the very reason why individuals and groups should practice appreciative joy if they wish to uplift themselves and be internally happy.

The chief characteristic of *muditā* is the sincere rejoicing in the prosperity, success, health, and happiness of others (*anumodanā*). Laughter and the like are not characteristics of *muditā* inasmuch as exhilaration (*pahasa*) is regarded as its direct enemy.

Muditā embraces all prosperous beings and is the congratulatory attitude of a person. It tends to eliminate any dislike (*arati*) towards a successful person.

Upekkhā

The fourth sublime state is the most difficult and the most essential. It is *upekkhā*, or equanimity. The etymological meaning of *upekkhā* is "discerning rightly," "viewing justly," or "looking impartially," that is, without attachment or aversion, without favor or disfavor.

Equanimity is necessary, especially for lay practitioners, who have to live in an ill-balanced world amidst fluctuating circumstances.

Slights and insults are the common lot of mankind. The world is so constituted that the good and the virtuous are often subject to unjust criticism and attack. It is heroic to maintain a balanced mind in such circumstances.

Loss and gain, fame and infamy, praise and blame, pain and happiness are eight worldly conditions that affect all humanity. Most people are perturbed when affected by such favorable or unfavorable conditions. One is elated when one is praised, and depressed when blamed and reviled. He is wise, says the *Buddha*, who, amidst such vicissitudes of life, stands unmoved like a rock, exercising perfect equanimity.

The *Buddha's* exemplary life offers to us worldlings an excellent example of equanimity. There was no religious teacher in the world who was so severely criticized, attacked, insulted, and reviled as the *Buddha*, and, yet, none so highly praised, honored, and revered.

Once, when He went in quest of alms, the *Buddha* was called an "outcast" by an impertinent Brahmin. He calmly endured the insult and then explained to the Brahmin that it is not birth that makes one an outcast but an ignoble character. Thereupon, the Brahmin was converted.

At another time, the Brahmin Akkosaka Bhāradvāja approached the *Buddha* and abused and reviled the Blessed One with rude, harsh words. But the *Buddha* was not offended and did not retaliate. Instead, He calmly questioned Akkosaka Bhāradvāja what he would do when guests visited his house. The Brahmin replied that he would prepare a feast to entertain them. When he had finished speaking, the *Buddha* said to him:

> *"Well, what would you do if they do not accept it from you, then to whom does the food belong?"*
>
> *"If they do not accept it, the food still belongs to us."*
>
> *"So too, Brahmin, we — who do not abuse anyone, who do not scold anyone, who do not rail against anyone — refuse to accept from you the abuse and scolding and tirade you let loose at us. It still belongs to you, Brahmin.*

Any abuse, anger, or threat belongs to the one who is uttering it. We do not have to accept it. Realizing the import of what the *Buddha* was saying, the man's character was completely transformed.[1057]

[1057] We must not allow people to do wrong to us. Whenever someone does something wrong, he harms others at the same time that he harms himself. If we allow him to do wrong, we are encouraging him to do wrong — this is called "enabling." We must use all of our strength to stop him, but only with goodwill,

The *Buddha* advises:

> *"Do not retaliate. Be as silent as a cracked gong when you are abused by others. If you do so, I deem that you have already attained nibbāna, although you have not realized nibbāna."*[1058]

These are golden words that should be heeded by all in this ill-disciplined world of today.

Once, a lady of the court induced some drunkards to revile the *Buddha* so much that Venerable Ānanda, His faithful attendant, implored the *Buddha* to leave the city and go elsewhere. But the *Buddha* was unperturbed.

On another occasion, a woman pretended to be pregnant and publicly accused the *Buddha* of being the father. Yet again, a woman was killed by the *Buddha's* rivals, and the *Buddha* was accused of the murder. His own cousin and disciple Devadatta made an unsuccessful attempt to crush the *Buddha* to death by hurling a rock at Him from a cliff. Some of His own disciples accused Him of jealousy, partiality, favoritism, and the like.

On the other hand, many sang the praises of the *Buddha*. Kings prostrated themselves at His feet and paid Him the highest reverence.

Like Mother Earth, the *Buddha* gracefully accepted everything in silence and with perfect equanimity.

Like a lion that does not tremble at every sound, one should not be perturbed by the poisoned darts of uncurbed tongues. Like the wind that does not cling to the meshes of a net, one should not be attached to the illusory pleasures of this changing world. Like the lotus that is unsoiled by the mud from which it springs, one should live unaffected by worldly temptations, ever calm, serene, and peaceful.

As with the first three virtues, so also *upekkhā* has attachment (*rāga*) as its direct enemy and callousness, or unintelligent indifference, as its indirect enemy.

Upekkhā discards clinging and aversion. An impartial attitude is its chief characteristic. He who practices equanimity is neither attracted by desirable objects nor repulsed by undesirable objects.

He who has perfected *upekkhā* will have the same attitude towards both the sinner and the saint, for he makes no distinction.

Mettā embraces all beings without distinction; *karuṇā* embraces those who are poor, miserable, downtrodden, sickly, sad, and suffering; *muditā* embraces those who are

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compassion, and sympathy for that person. If we act with hatred or anger, then we only aggravate the situation. But we cannot have goodwill for such a person unless our mind is calm and peaceful. So, we must practice to develop peace within ourselves, and, then, we can solve the problem. Here, we can follow the example of the *Buddha*. In the story given above, the *Buddha* calmly endured the abuse that was heaped upon him. Then, through His wisdom and compassion, He gently made the man understand that his abusive language belonged exclusively to him, was exclusively a reflection on his own character, and had nothing whatsoever to do with the *Buddha*. Thereupon, the embarrassed man was completely transformed.

[1058] *Dhammapada*, X, Punishment, verse 134.

prosperous, successful, healthy, and happy; and *upekkhā* embraces the good and the bad, the loved and the unloved, the pleasant and the unpleasant.

He who wishes to be divine in this life itself should tirelessly cultivate these four sublime virtues, which are dormant in all.

He who wishes to perfect himself and compassionately work for the welfare of all beings in the course of his countless births in *saṁsāra* may strenuously develop the ten perfections (*pāramī*) and ultimately become a *Sammā Sambuddha*, a Fully Enlightened One.

He who wishes to eradicate the defiling passions within him and put an end to suffering by realizing *nibbāna* at the earliest possible opportunity may diligently follow the unique Noble Eightfold Path, which still exists in its pristine purity.

The *Buddha* sums up our mission thus:

> *"Suppose, O Monks, this mighty earth were one mass of water and a man were to throw down upon that water a yoke with one hole. Then, a wind comes from the east and wafts it west, and a wind comes from the west and wafts it east; a north wind wafts it south, and a south wind wafts it north. Then, once, at the end of a hundred years, a blind turtle rises to the surface of the water. How likely is it that he would push his neck through that one-holed yoke whenever he popped up to the surface at the end of a hundred years?"*
>
> *"It is unlikely, Lord, that the blind turtle would do that."*
>
> *"It is just as unlikely, O Monks, that one will gain rebirth in a human form; just as unlikely that a Tathāgata will arise in the world, an Arahant, a Fully Enlightened One; just as unlikely that the Dhamma and the Disciplinary Rules proclaimed by a Tathāgata should be revealed in the world.*
>
> *"But now, indeed, O Monks, this state of human birth has been won, a Tathāgata has arisen in the world, and the Dhamma and Disciplinary Rules proclaimed by the Tathāgata have been revealed in the world.*
>
> *"Wherefore, O Monks, you must make an effort to realize: 'This is suffering, this is the cause of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering'."*

The Purpose of Life

According to Buddhism, the purpose of life is to attain Supreme Enlightenment (*sambodhi*), that is, to liberate the mind from all that enslaves it, to understand oneself as one really is. This may be achieved through virtuous conduct, mental culture, and penetrative insight or, in other words, through service and perfection.

In service are included boundless loving-kindness, compassion, and absolute selflessness, which prompt man to be of service to others. Perfection embraces absolute purity and absolute wisdom.

> *"Monks, the aim of the religious life is not to gain material profit, nor to win veneration, nor to reach the highest morality, nor to be capable of the highest mental concentration. Monks, the ultimate end of the religious life is the unshakable liberation of the mind. This is the essence. This is the goal."*

Few people are capable of wholehearted commitment, and that is why so few people experience a real transformation through their spiritual practice. It is a matter of giving up our own viewpoints, of letting go of opinions and preconceived ideas, and, instead, following the *Buddha's* guidelines. Although this may sound simple, in practice, most people find it extremely difficult. Their ingrained viewpoints, based on deductions derived from cultural and social norms, are in the way. ■

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Eight Worldly Conditions (Aṭṭhalokadhamma)

"As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind, even so, the wise are not ruffled by praise or blame."[1059]

The Ill-balanced World

The world in which we live is not absolutely rosy, nor is it totally thorny. The rose is soft, beautiful, and fragrant, but the stem on which it grows is full of thorns. To an optimist, this world is rosy; to a pessimist, it is thorny. But, to a realist, this world is neither absolutely rosy nor absolutely thorny. From a realistic standpoint, this world contains both beautiful roses and prickly thorns.

An understanding person will not be infatuated by the beauty of the rose but will view it as it is. Knowing well the nature of the thorns, he will view them as they are and will take precautions not to be injured by them.

Like the pendulum that perpetually swings to the left and then to the right and then back to the left, there are four desirable and four undesirable conditions in this world that everyone will inevitably face in the course of one's lifetime — they are: gain (*lābha*) and loss (*alābha*); fame (*yasa*) and infamy (*ayasa*); praise (*pasaṁsā*) and blame (*nindā*); and happiness (*sukha*) and pain (*dukkha*).

Gain and Loss

Businessmen, as a rule, are subject to both gain and loss. It is quite natural to be happy when one obtains a gain or a profit. In itself, there is nothing wrong with this. Such righteous or unrighteous profits produce some pleasure, which average men seek. Without pleasurable moments, though temporary, life would not be worth living. In this competitive and chaotic world, rarely do people enjoy some kind of happiness that gladdens their hearts. Such happiness, though material, can contribute to one's overall health and longevity.

[1059] *Dhammapada*, VI, The Wise, verse 81.

The problem arises when there is a loss. One can easily bear profits smilingly, but not so the losses. More often than not, the losses will lead to psychological and physical problems when they are severe, and even to suicide in the most extreme cases. It is under such adverse circumstances that one must exhibit moral courage and maintain a balanced mind. All must face ups and downs in the course of one's life. One should always be prepared for the losses in particular. Then, there will be less disappointment.

When something is stolen, naturally one feels sad. But, by becoming sad, one would not be able to retrieve the loss. One should think that someone has benefited thereby, though unrighteously. May he be well and happy!

Or, one can console oneself, thinking: "It is only a minor loss." One may even adopt a highly philosophical attitude: "There is nothing to be called 'me' or 'mine'."

At the time of the *Buddha*, a noble lady was, on one occasion, offering food to Venerable Sāriputta and some monks. While serving them, she received a note stating that her husband and all her sons, who had gone to settle a dispute, were waylaid and killed. Without getting upset, she calmly placed the note in her waist pouch and continued serving the monks as if nothing had happened. A maid, who was carrying a pot of ghee to offer to the monks, inadvertently slipped and broke the pot. Thinking that the lady would naturally feel sorry over the loss, Venerable Sāriputta consoled her, saying that all breakable things are bound to break. The wise lady unperturbedly remarked: "Bhante, what is this trivial loss? I have just received a note stating that my husband and sons were killed by some assassins. I placed it in my pouch without losing my balance. I am serving you all despite the loss." Such valor is highly commendable.

Once, the *Buddha* went seeking alms in a village. Owing to the intervention of Māra, the Evil One, the *Buddha* did not obtain any food. When Māra questioned the *Buddha* rather sarcastically whether He was hungry or not, the *Buddha* solemnly explained the mental attitude of those who are free from Impediments and replied: "Ah, happily do we live, we who have no Impediments. Feeders of joy shall we be even as the gods of the Radiant Realm."

On another occasion, the *Buddha* and His disciples spent the rainy season (*vassa*) in a village at the invitation of a Brahmin, who, however, completely forgot his duty to attend to the needs of the *Buddha* and the *Sangha*. Throughout a period of three months, although Venerable Moggallāna volunteered to obtain food by his psychic powers, the *Buddha*, making no complaint, was content with the fodder of horses offered by a horse dealer.

Visākhā, the *Buddha's* chief female lay disciple, used to visit the monastery, decked out in a very valuable outer garment, to attend to the needs of the *Buddha* and the *Sangha*. On entering the monastery, she would remove the garment and give it to her maid for custody. Once, the maid unintentionally left the garment in the monastery and returned home. Venerable Ānanda, noticing the garment, put it in a safe place to be given to Visākhā the next time she visited the monastery. Visākhā, discovering the loss, advised the maid to look for it but not to take it back if any *Bhikkhu* had touched it. On inquiry, the maid found out that Venerable Ānanda had put the garment away for safekeeping. Returning home, she reported the matter to Visākhā. Thereupon, Visākhā

decided to sell the costly garment and visited the monastery to ask the *Buddha* what meritorious act she should perform with the money obtained from the sale. The *Buddha* advised her to build a monastery for the benefit of the *Sangha*. Inasmuch as there was nobody to buy the garment because of its high cost, Visākhā herself bought it and built a monastery, which she then offered to the *Sangha*. After the offering, she expressed her gratitude to the maid, saying: "If you had not inadvertently left my garment, I would not have had an opportunity to perform this meritorious act. Please share the merit." Instead of grieving over the temporary loss of her garment and reprimanding the maid for her carelessness, she thanked her for providing an opportunity to be of service to the *Sangha*.

The exemplary attitude of cultured Visākhā is a memorable lesson to all those who are quickly irritated over the misdeeds of others.

> *"Do not give your attention to what others do or fail to do, whether they are doing what is right or what is wrong. Rather, give your attention to what you do or fail to do, whether you are doing what is right or what is wrong."*[1060]

One must bear losses cheerfully with courage and fortitude. Unexpectedly, they confront us, very often in groups and not singly. One must face them with equanimity (*upekkhā*) and think of them as opportunities to practice that sublime virtue.

Fame and Infamy

Fame, or renown (*yasa*), and infamy, or ill-repute (*ayasa*), are another pair of inevitable worldly conditions that confront us in the course of our daily lives.

We welcome fame, but we dislike infamy. Fame gladdens our heart, while infamy disheartens us. We desire to become famous. We long to see our names and pictures appear in the papers. We are greatly pleased when our activities, however insignificant, are given publicity. Sometimes, we seek undue publicity too.

To see their picture in a magazine, some are willing to pay any amount. To obtain an honor, some are prepared to offer bribes or give fat donations. For the sake of publicity, some make a public display of their generosity, but they may be totally indifferent to the sufferings of the poor and the needy right under their very noses. One may bring charges against and punish a starving person who, to appease his hunger, steals a morsel of food from one's garden but would not hesitate to present large sums of money to charitable organizations working to relieve hunger in far off corners of the world if it meant public recognition for the charitable act. Such is the hypocrisy of the world!

These are human frailties. Most people do even a good action with an ulterior motive. Selfless persons, who act disinterestedly, are rare in this world. Even if the motive is not very praiseworthy, those who do any good are to be congratulated for

[1060] *Dhammapada*, IV, Flowers, verse 50.

having done a beneficial act. Most worldlings have something up their sleeves. Well, who is totally good? How many are perfectly pure in their motives? How many are absolutely altruistic?

We need not search after fame. If we are worthy of fame, it will come to us unsought. The bee will search out the flower. The flower, however, does not invite the bee.

True, we feel naturally happy, indeed extremely happy, when our fame is spread far and wide. But we must realize that fame, honor, and glory only lead to the grave. They vanish into thin air. They are empty words, though they may bring momentary pleasure to the ear.

What about infamy? Infamy is not palatable either to the ear or the mind. We are undoubtedly perturbed when unkind, defamatory words pierce our ears. The mental pain is still greater when the so-called "report" is unjust and absolutely false.

Normally, it takes years to erect a magnificent building. In a minute or two, with modern weapons, it can easily be demolished. Sometimes, it takes years to build a good reputation. Yet, in a matter of minutes, one's hard-earned good name can be ruined. No one is exempt from the devastating remark beginning with the infamous "but." One's whole record can be blackened by this so-called "but." Though one may live the life of a saint, one will not be exempt from criticism, attacks, and insults.

Even the *Buddha* was not exempt. He was both the most famous and the most maligned religious teacher of His time. Some antagonists of the *Buddha* spread a rumor that a woman used to spend a night in the monastery. Foiled in this base attempt to discredit the *Buddha*, they then spread a false rumor among the populace that the *Buddha* and His disciples had murdered that very woman and had hidden her corpse in the rubbish heap of withered flowers within the monastery. When His historic mission met with success and many sought ordination under Him, His adversaries maligned Him saying that He was robbing the mothers of their sons, depriving wives of their husbands, and that He was obstructing the progress of the nation.

Failing in all of these attempts to ruin His noble reputation, the *Buddha's* own cousin and jealous disciple Devadatta attempted to kill Him by hurling a rock at Him from above. Being a *Buddha*, however, He could not be killed.

If such is the fate of faultless, pure *Buddhas*, what can be the state of ordinary worldlings?

The higher one climbs the ladder of success, the more conspicuous one becomes. The faultfinding world publicizes such a person's shortcomings and misdeeds but hides his virtues. When one is misrepresented, whether deliberately or inadvertently, it is wise, as Epictetus advises, to think or say to oneself: "Yea, by his slight acquaintanceship and little knowledge of myself, I am slightly criticized. But, if I were known better, the accusations against me would be even more serious and greater."

It is useless to waste time trying to correct the false reports unless circumstances compel us to do so. The vicious are gratified when they see that someone is hurt. That is what they expect. If we are indifferent, such misrepresentations will fall on deaf ears. Thus:

1. When we see the faults of others, we should behave like a blind person.
2. When we hear criticism of others, we should behave like a deaf person.
3. When tempted to speak ill of others, we should behave like a dumb person.

It is not possible to put a stop to false accusations, reports, and rumors, but we do not have to spread them when they are about others or be upset about them when they are about us. Though difficult, we should try to cultivate non-attachment.

"Alone we come, alone we go. Non-attachment is happiness in this world."

Paying no heed to the poisonous darts of uncurbed tongues, we should wander alone serving others to the best of our ability.

Praise and Blame

Praise (*pasaṁsā*) and blame (*nindā*) are two more worldly conditions that affect mankind. It is natural to be elated when praised and to be depressed when blamed.

Amidst praise and blame, the *Buddha* says, the wise do not exhibit either elation or depression. Like a solid rock that is not shaken by the wind, they remain unmoved.

The wise do not resort to flattery nor do they desire flattery from others. Those deserving praise, they commend without flattery. Those deserving blame, they reproach with compassion in order to reform them, without even a hint of contempt or anger.

Praise, if worthy, is pleasing to the ears; if unworthy, as in the case of flattery, though pleasing, it is deceptive. But both praise and flattery are empty, without lasting value.

Many who knew the *Buddha* personally extolled His virtues in their own way. One Upāli, a millionaire, upon becoming a convert, praised the *Buddha*, enumerating a hundred virtues extemporaneously. Nine sterling virtues of the *Buddha* are still being recited by His devoted followers while looking at His image. They are a subject of meditation for the devout. Those well-deserved virtues are still a great inspiration to His followers. The formula is as follows:

Iti'pi so bhagavā arahaṁ sammāsambuddho vijjā-caraṇa-sampanno sugato lokavidū anuttaro purisadamma-sārathī satthā deva manussāmaṁ buddho bhagavā'ti.

Such, indeed, is the Exalted One — Worthy, Fully Enlightened, Endowed with Wisdom and Conduct, Well-farer, Knower of the Worlds, an Incomparable Charioteer for the training of individuals, Teacher of gods and men, Omniscient, and Holy.

What about blame? The *Buddha* says:

> *"There is an old saying, Atula — it is not just of today: 'They blame those who sit silent, they blame those who speak too much, they blame those who speak too little.' In this world, there is no one who escapes blame.*
>
> *"There never was, there never will be, nor does there exist now, a person who receives only blame or only praise."*[1061]

The majority of people in the world, remarks the *Buddha*, are ill-disciplined. The deluded and the wicked are prone to seek only the ugliness in others but not the good and the beautiful.

One may work with the best of intentions, but the outside world can misconstrue his intentions and accuse him of motives never even dreamt of.

One may serve and help others to the best of one's ability, sometimes even incurring debt or selling one's belongings to do so. But, later, those very persons whom he has helped will find fault with him, tarnish his good name, and rejoice in his downfall.

In the *Jātaka* stories, there is a tale about Guttila the musician. Guttila diligently taught everything he knew about music to his pupil. But, then, the ungrateful pupil unsuccessfully tried to compete with his teacher and ruin him.

There was no religious teacher so highly praised and so severely criticized, reviled, and blamed as the *Buddha*. Such is the fate of great men.

Insults are the common lot of humanity. The more one works and the greater one becomes, the more one is subject to insults and humiliation.

The *Buddha* exhorted his followers not to retaliate. Vengeance will be met with vengeance; force will be met with force; hatred will be met with hatred.

> *"Do not retaliate. Be as silent as a cracked gong when you are abused by others. If you do so, I deem that you have already attained nibbāna, although you have not realized nibbāna."*[1062]

> *"Returning hatred with hatred will never bring hatred to an end in this world; only by replacing hatred with love will hatred come to an end. This is an ancient and eternal law."*[1063]

When insulted, we should think that we are being given an opportunity to practice patience. Thus, instead of being offended, we should be grateful to our adversaries.

Happiness and Pain

Happiness (*sukha*) and pain (*dukkha*) are the last pair of opposites. They are the most powerful factors that affect mankind.

[1061] *Dhammapada*, XVII, Anger, verses 227—228.
[1062] *Dhammapada*, X, Punishment, verse 134.
[1063] *Dhammapada*, I, Twin Verses, verse 5.

That which is easy to endure is *sukha*, while that which is difficult to endure is *dukkha*. Ordinary happiness results from the gratification of a desire. However, no sooner is the desired thing gained than we begin to desire something else — so insatiate are our selfish desires. The enjoyment of sensory pleasures is the highest and only pleasure available to the average person. There is, no doubt, a momentary happiness in the anticipation, gratification, and recollection of such sensory pleasures, which are so highly valued by the sensualist, but they are illusory and temporary.

Can material possessions give us genuine, lasting happiness? If so, millionaires would not think of committing suicide. Can dominion over the whole world produce true happiness? Alexander the Great, who triumphantly marched from Macedonia to India, conquering the lands along the way, sighed for not having more lands to conquer. Are Emperors, Kings, Presidents, or Prime Ministers always happy? Czar Nicholas II was assassinated, as was President John Kennedy, the Dalai Lama and his family were forced to flee into exile, while President Bill Clinton was humiliated before the entire world.

Real happiness is found within and is not to be defined in terms of wealth, power, honors, or conquests.

If worldly possessions are forcibly or unjustly obtained or are misdirected, or even viewed with attachment, they will be a source of pain and sorrow for their owners.

The *Buddha* elaborated four kinds of happiness for a lay person — they are:

1. The first is the happiness of possession, namely, health, wealth, longevity, beauty, joy, property, strength, children, etc.

2. The second source of happiness is derived from the enjoyment of such possessions. Ordinary men and women wish to enjoy themselves. The *Buddha* does not advise all to renounce their worldly pleasures and retire to solitude.

   The enjoyment of wealth lies not only in using it for our own good but also in giving it away for the welfare of others. Our possessions are only temporary — all that is ours and that is dear to us must change and disappear. At our death, we must leave everything behind. However, what we give to others, we take with us. After our death, we are remembered for the good deeds we have done with our worldly possessions.

3. Not falling into debt is another source of happiness. If we are content with what we have and if we are economical, we need not be in debt to anyone. Debtors live in mental agony and are under obligation to their creditors. Though poor, when we are free of debt, we feel relieved and are happy.

4. Leading a blameless life is one of the best sources of happiness for a lay person. A blameless person is a blessing to himself and to others. He is admired by all and feels happy. It should be remembered, however, that it is virtually impossible to be liked by all. Those who are noble-minded are only concerned with leading a blameless life and are indifferent to external opinions, whether approving or disapproving. The

majority in this world delight themselves in enjoying pleasures, while some others seek delight in renouncing them. Non-attachment, or the transcending of material pleasures, is happiness to the spiritually inclined. The bliss of *nibbāna*, which is a bliss of relief from suffering, is the highest form of happiness.

> *"If by giving up a lesser happiness,*[1064] *one may behold a greater one,*[1065] *let those who are wise give up the lesser happiness and pursue the greater happiness."*[1066]

Ordinary happiness we welcome, but not its opposite — pain, which is rather difficult to endure. What is happiness for one may not be happiness for another.

Pain, or suffering, comes in different forms.

> *"Now this, O Bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth as to Suffering: Birth [earthly existence] indeed is suffering; old age is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; likewise sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. To be conjoined with what one dislikes is suffering, to be separated from what one likes is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering. In brief, the five aggregates of clinging are suffering."*

We suffer when we are subject to old age. We have no choice but to bear the sufferings of old age with equanimity.

More painful than sufferings due to old age are sufferings caused by disease. If chronic, we may feel that death is preferable. Even the slightest toothache or headache can be unbearable. When we are subject to disease, without being worried, we should be able to bear it calmly. We do not have to look far to see others who are suffering more than we are. Therefore, we should be thankful that we have escaped from a still more serious disease or physical disability.

Very often, we are separated from those who are near and dear to us. Such separation can cause great mental anguish. We should understand that all association must end with separation. Here is a good opportunity to practice non-attachment.

More often than not, we are compelled to be in the presence of unpleasant people or circumstances. We should be able to abide them. Perhaps, we are simply reaping the effects of our own *kamma*, past or present. We should try to accommodate ourselves to the unpleasant situation or try to overcome the obstacle without developing aversion.

Death — both of those near and dear to us and our own — is the greatest sorrow we are forced to face. Sometimes, death comes not singly but in numbers that may even cause a nervous breakdown.

Patācārā lost those near and dear to her — parents, husband, brother, and two children — and then went mad. The *Buddha* consoled her.

[1064] A sensory pleasure.
[1065] The bliss of *nibbāna*.
[1066] *Dhammapada*, XXI, Miscellaneous, verse 290.

Kisāgotamī lost her only child. Unable to accept his death, she went in search of a remedy to revive him, carrying the corpse. She approached the *Buddha* and asked for such a remedy. The *Buddha* directed her to bring Him some mustard seed, provided it was obtained from a house where no one had died. In vain, she went from house to house, only to discover that death had visited all. At last, she understood the nature of life and, accepting the death of her child, returned empty-handed to the *Buddha*.

The *Buddha* was constantly subject to headaches. His last illness caused Him much physical pain. As a result of Devadatta's attempt to kill Him by hurling a rock at Him, His foot was wounded by a splinter, which necessitated an operation. Sometimes, He was compelled to do without food. On one occasion, he had to be content with horse-fodder. Due to the disobedience of His own disciples, He was compelled to retire to a forest for three months. In the forest, He slept on a bed of leaves spread on rough ground and had to face piercing, cold winds. Yet, He slept with perfect equanimity. Amidst pain and happiness, He lived with a balanced mind.

The *Buddha* said:

"When touched by worldly conditions, the mind of an Arahant never wavers."

Amidst gain and loss, fame and infamy, praise and blame, happiness and pain, let us try to maintain a balanced mind.

The Nature of Buddhism

A reproach sometimes leveled against Buddhism is that it is a gloomy and "pessimistic" teaching. Upon examination, however, this reproach proves entirely unfounded. For, as we have seen, the *Buddha* not only discloses and explains the fact of suffering (*dukkha*), but He also shows the way to find total release from it. In view of this fact, one is rather entitled to call the *Buddha's* Teaching the boldest optimism ever proclaimed in the world.

Truly, Buddhism is a teaching that assures hope, comfort, and happiness, even to the most unfortunate. It is a teaching that offers, even to the most wretched criminals, prospects of final perfection and peace, and this, not through blind belief, or prayers, or asceticism, or outward ceremonies, rites, and rituals, but through walking and earnestly persevering on that Noble Eightfold Path of inward perfection, purity, and emancipation of the heart.

The *Buddha's* Teachings are the greatest heritage mankind has received from the past. The *Buddha's* message of nonviolence and peace, of love and compassion, of tolerance and understanding, of truth and wisdom, of respect and regard for all life, of freedom from selfishness, hatred, and violence, delivered over two thousand six hundred years ago, stands good for today and will stand forever as the Truth. It is an eternal message.

APPENDIX[1067]

Buddhist Mental Therapy

"Guard yourself against evil thoughts; control your mind. Give up evil thoughts, and cultivate good thoughts."[1068]

It has been estimated that one out of every four persons in the world's great cities today is in need of psychiatric treatment, which is equivalent to saying that the percentage of neurotics in contemporary civilization runs well into two figures.

This high incidence of personality disorders is believed to be a new phenomenon, and various factors have been adduced to account for it, all of them being typical features of modern urban life. The sense of insecurity arising from material economic discord; the feeling of instability engendered by excessive competition in commerce and industry, with booms, slumps, redundancy, and unemployment; the fear of nuclear war; the striving to "keep up" socially and financially with others; the disparity between different income levels combined with a general desire to adopt the manner of life of the more privileged groups; sexual repression, which is, at the same time, accompanied by continual erotic titillation from films, books, and the exploitation of sex in commercial advertising — all these, and a host of subsidiary phenomena related to them, are characteristic of our age. Not least among them as a disturbing influence is the need to feel personally important in a civilization that denies importance to all but a few.

Each of these factors is doubtless a potential cause of psychological unbalance, and, taken all together, they may well be expected to produce personality maladjustments of a more or less disabling nature, particularly in the great cities of the world, where the pressures of modern life are felt most acutely. The widespread emotional unbalance among the younger generation, which has developed into an international cult, with its own mythology and folklore and its own archetypal figures symbolic of the younger generation, seems to substantiate the belief that we are living in an era of psychoneurosis.

Yet, it is necessary to review this startling picture with caution. We have no statistical means of judging whether people of former days were less subject to neuroses than those of the present. The evidence of history does not entirely bear out the assumption that they were. Patterns of living may change radically, but human nature and its themes remain fairly constant in the main. When Shakespeare, in the robust and full-blooded Elizabethan era, drew his picture of neurosis in Hamlet, he was drawing from models that had been familiar from classical times and could doubtless be matched among his contemporaries. Greek and Roman history records many outstanding cases of behavior that we now recognize as psychotic, while the Middle Ages abounded in symptoms of mass neurosis amounting to hysteria. The fear of witchcraft that held all of

[1067] This appendix is adapted from an essay by Francis Story and published in *Dimensions of Buddhist Thought: Collected Essays* (Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1985]), pp. 342—355.
[1068] *Dhammapada*, XVII, Anger, verse 233.

Europe in its grip for three centuries was a neurosis so prevalent that it constituted a norm,[1069] while almost the same may be said of the more extravagant forms of religious behavior characteristic of that and later periods. The extraordinary Children's Crusade of 1212, when thousands of children from France and Germany set out on foot to conquer the Holy Land for Christendom and never returned, is one example. Here, the influence of a prevailing idea on young and emotionally unstable minds is comparable to the climate of thought that, in our own times, has produced radical Islamicists, suicide bombers, and religious fundamentalists of every persuasion.[1070] There is no strict line of demarcation between a religious ecstasy and a nihilistic expression of revolt, as we may learn from Dostoyevsky, himself a neurotic of no mean stature. The private mystique of the neurotic may be caught up in the larger world of mass neurotic fantasy, where it adds its contribution to a world that is apart from that of its particular age but that reflects it as in the distortions of a dream. Because of this, the neurotic is often found to be the spokesman and prophet of his generation. Facilities of communication have made this more than ever possible, creating a mental climate of tremendous power that knows no barriers and can only, with difficulty, be kept within the bounds of the prevailing norm. Adolph Hitler turned a large section of German youths into psychopaths, firstly, because his personal neurosis found a response in theirs, and, secondly, because he was able to communicate it to them directly by means of radio, newspapers, and other modern media of propaganda. At the same time, the unstable personality of the neuropath drew support and an intensification of its subliminal urges from the response it evoked in countless people who had never come into personal contact with the source. The real danger of neurosis today is its increased communicability; people are in contact with one another more than they have ever been before. The tendency to standardize, undesirable in itself, has the further disadvantage that it too often results in the wrong standards being accepted. Epidemic diseases of the mind are more to be feared than those of the body.

But those who are inclined to believe that personality disorders are a phenomenon of recent growth may draw comfort from Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. There, we have a compendium of cases of individual and collective neuroses gathered from all ages and showing every variety of hallucinatory and compulsive behavior ranging from mild eccentricity to the complete alienation from reality that is classed as insanity. Psychopathic degeneration, criminal behavior, alcoholism, and drug addiction, as well as suicidal and homicidal tendencies, are as old as the history of mankind itself.

[1069] No one knows the exact figure, because records were not kept, but it seems certain that, during the three-hundred-year period when the fear of witchcraft gripped Europe, between three and five million women were tortured and killed by the "Holy Inquisition," an institution established by the Roman Catholic Church to suppress heresy. This surely ranks, together with the Holocaust, as one of the darkest chapters in human history. Cited from Eckhart Tolle, *A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life's Purpose* (New York, NY: Dutton [2005]), pp. 155—156.

[1070] For a sobering analysis of the detrimental effect that the clash between religion and reason has had in the modern world, cf. Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York, NY, and London: W. W. Norton & Company [2004]) and *Letter to a Christian Nation* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf [2006]) by the same author.

Nor is there any real evidence that people living in simpler and more primitive societies are less prone to psychological disturbances than those of modern urban communities. The rural areas of a European country can show their proportion of neurotics in real life no less than in fiction, while, in those parts of the world least touched by Western civilization, the symptoms of mental illness among indigenous peoples are very common and are prone to take extreme forms. Where an inherent tendency to confuse the world of reality with that of dreams and imagination is worked upon by superstitious fears, morbid neurotic reactions are a frequent result. The psychosomatic sickness produced by the witch-doctor's curse, which so often culminates in death, is even more common than are the mentally-induced diseases of the West that are its counterpart.

In one respect, primitive societies are superior to those of today, and that is in the preservation of initiation ceremonies. These give the adolescent the necessary sense of importance and of "belonging"; they serve as tests that justify the place in tribal life that the initiate is to take up. By their severity, they satisfy the initiate that he is worthy. Initiation rites have survived to some extent in the boisterous "hazing" given to new arrivals in most institutions for the young, but they have no official sanction and do not confer any acknowledged status. To be psychologically effective, an initiation ceremony must be either religious or in some way demonstrative of the new manhood or womanhood of the initiate. It then dispels feelings of inferiority and the self-doubtings that are a frequent cause of neurosis and sometimes of delinquent behavior in young people in contemporary Western society. Primitive societies, however, have their own peculiar causes of mental disturbance, and it is a mistake to suppose that they are superior in this context to more sophisticated social structures.

The fact is that more attention is given to minor psychological maladjustments today than was ever the case in former times, and departures from the normal standards of behavior are more noticeable in civilized than in primitive societies. The urge to run to the psychiatrist's couch has become a part of contemporary culture. It is true that modern life produces unnatural nervous stresses, but strain and conflict are a part of the experience of living, in any conditions. There has been merely a shifting of the points of tension. The more man is artificially protected from the dangers surrounding primitive peoples, the more sensitive he becomes to minor irritants; yet, man in a completely safe environment and free from all causes of anxiety — if that were more than theoretically possible — would be supremely bored, and boredom itself is a cause of neurosis. Human beings can be psychologically as well as physically over-protected, and the civilized man falls prey to psychological conflicts brought about by situations which are much less truly anxiety-producing than those that menace the lives of primitive people every day. Habituated by education and example to expect more of life than the human situation gives him any reason to expect, the modern man feels the impact of forces hostile to these expectations more keenly than he need do. Modern commercial civilization is continually fostering and propagating desires which all men cannot satisfy equally, and desire artificially stimulated, only to meet with frustration, is a prime cause of psychological disorders. Herein lies the chief difference between our own and former

eras. There is also the need for periods of true relaxation in which people let go of their desire to be continually entertained.

The systematic study of abnormal psychology began with the work of J.-M. Charcot[1071] in 1862. Closely following upon that, the advent of psychoanalysis brought the subject of personality disorders into prominence. There then came a breaking down of the distinction that had formerly been made between normal and abnormal psychology, and the two became merged in what is now called "dynamic psychology." It was found that the obsessions and compulsions of neurosis are not something distinct from the ordinary modes of behavior but are only extreme and sharply-defined forms of the prejudices and habit patterns of the "normal" person. In defining abnormality, it has become the custom to place the line of demarcation simply at the point where the extreme symptoms make some form of treatment necessary for the person who deviates persistently from the average standards of his group. Thus "normal" and "abnormal" are purely relative terms, whose only point of comparison is that provided by the generally-accepted habit patterns of a particular group. Even though the group itself may be collectively abnormal, its members must be considered "normal" if they conform to the collective "norms" of that group, with the result that we are continuously compelled to make a reinterpretation of what is meant by these terms of reference as norms change.

All behavior is a form of adjustment, and this is true equally of behavior that is socially acceptable (the "norm") or socially unacceptable. It is really the active response of a living organism to some stimulus or some situation that acts upon it. The ways in which certain persons deviate from normal standards in behavior are nothing but individual ways of meeting and adjusting to situations. This new way of regarding the problem is of the utmost importance, particularly when we come to examine the Buddhist system of psychology. In Buddhism, all modes of consciousness are seen as responses to sensory stimuli, and these responses are conditioned by predisposing mental formations (*saṁkhāra*[1072]) from past volition. For example, where one person sees an object and is attracted to it, while another is repelled by the same object, the cause is to be found in mental biases set up in the past. All reactions, furthermore, are conditioned by universal misapprehension of the real nature of the object as it is cognized through the senses.

There is, therefore, a common denominator of misunderstanding that takes the form of collective delusion; it constructs the world of sensory perceptions and values out of the abstract world of forces that is the actuality of physics. Where there is, in reality, nothing but processes and events, an ever-changing flux of energies, the mind construes a world of things and personalities. In this world, the human consciousness moves selectively, clinging to this, rejecting that, according to personal preferences of habit and prior self-conditioning. The consciousness-dominating factor known to Buddhism as *avijjā* (ignorance), *moha* (delusion), or *vipallāsa* (misapprehension) is essentially a condition of mental disorder, a hallucinatory state. The Pāḷi axiom *sabbe puthujjanā*

[1071] Jean-Martin Charcot (1825—1893) was a founder (with Guillaume Duchenne) of modern neurology and was one of France's greatest medical teachers and clinicians.
[1072] Sanskrit *saṁskāra*.

ummattakā[1073] "all worldlings are deluded" indicates that the whole purpose of Buddhism is to apply mental therapy to a condition that, accepted as the norm, is, in truth, nothing but a state of universal delusion.

The *puthujjana*, or "worldling," who is thus described is the average man; that is, all human beings except those who have entered on the four stages of purification, the *Sotāpanna* (Stream-Enterer), *Sakadāgāmī* (Once-Returner), *Anāgāmī* (Non-Returner), and *Arahant* (Foe-Destroyer). The *puthujjana* is characterized by mental reactions of craving for states that are impermanent, subject to suffering, devoid of reality, and inherently impure. These he wrongly imagines to be permanent, productive of happiness, invested with self-existence, and pleasurable. His hankering for them is accompanied by mental biases (*āsavas*), mind-defiling passions (*kilesas*), and psychological fetters (*saṁyojana*), which, in Buddhism, are seen as the root causes of wrong action and consequent unhappiness. What we call the "norm" is an average balance of these mental factors and their opposites, in exactly the same way that a state of normal physical health is merely the "balance of power" between the various classes of bacteria in the body. If one class of bacteria gains ascendancy over the others, it begins to have a destructive effect on the living tissues, and a state of disease supervenes. Psychologically, an increase in any one of the mental defilements constitutes a change over from a normal to an abnormal psychology. Since all "worldlings" are deluded, what we are concerned with in dynamic psychology is the degree of delusion and its underlying causes. This is the case also in Buddhist psychology.

Freudian psychoanalysis works on the assumption that, when the origin of a personality disorder is known, its influence on the unconscious motivation will automatically disappear. Freud endeavored to trace all psychic traumas to experiences in infancy or early childhood, and he made the libido the basis of his system. His work opened up many hitherto unsuspected areas of personality and made a great contribution to our knowledge of the subject. But the defects of Freud's theories can be understood in terms of his system, for he tended to exaggerate certain motives unduly, and, in deliberately searching for these, he worked on a method of personal selectivity that was bound to become apparent to Jung and others among his successors. His therapeutic methods may also be questioned, for the conflicts engendered by unconscious motivation do not always cease when the original cause of the trauma is brought to the surface. For this and other reasons, psychotherapy has so far not produced the benefits that were once expected of it. In many cases, the most it can do is to enable the subject to come to terms with himself and to "live with" his condition. The limited nature of its success is indicated by the need to resort to physical ("psychopharmacological") treatment for cases that have passed from neurosis to psychosis, such as the use of drugs and tranquilizers.

In contrast to the expedients of Western psychiatry, Buddhist mental therapy aims at total integration of the personality on a higher level. Since craving (*taṇhā*) is the root cause of suffering (*dukkha*), it is necessary to diminish, and finally extinguish, craving. But desire is also the mainspring of volition (*cetanā*), so the first stage of the process

[1073] *Vibhanga Aṭṭhakathā.*

must be the substitution of higher objectives for the motivations of the libido and their offshoots. The libido-actuated urges must give place to the consciously-directed motives of the *adhicitta*, or higher mind. It is here that Buddhism introduces a point of reference that Western psychotherapy has been unable to fit comfortably into its theories — the field of ethical values.

The discarding of many conventional and religious moral attitudes, on the ground that they are, for the most part, contingent and arbitrary, has left the psychologist without ethical determinants in certain important areas of his work. While accepting as the norm the standards of contemporary society, psychologists have not been able to work out any universal basis on which what is "right" and what is "wrong" in some aspects of human conduct can be established. The defect has been a serious handicap in the treatment of antisocial and delinquent behavior, for the psychologist confronted with examples of deviationist and unacceptable behavior finds himself unable to decide on what authority he is setting up as the "norm" a standard that he knows to be mostly a product of the environment and social convenience. Clinical diagnoses and moral judgments do not always point in the same direction.

Buddhist ethico-psychology cuts through the problem by asserting boldly that the measure of immoral behavior is simply the degree to which it is dominated by craving (*taṇhā*) and the illusion of selfhood (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). This at once gives an absolute standard and an unchanging point of reference. It is when ego-assertive instinct overrides conventional inhibitions that behavior becomes immoral and unacceptable; it is when the over-sensitive ego fears contact with reality that it retreats into a fantasy of its own devising. The neurotic creates his own private world of myth with its core in his own ego, and his delusions of grandeur, of persecution, or of anxiety revolve around this. Neurosis then passes imperceptibly into psychosis. The ordinary man also, impelled by ego-assertiveness and the desire for self-gratification, is continually in danger of slipping across the undefined border between normal and abnormal behavior. He is held in check only by the inhibitions imposed by training. The attainment of complete mental health requires gradual shedding of the delusions centered in the ego, and it begins with the analytical understanding that the ego itself is a delusion. Therefore, the first of the fetters (*saṁyojana*) to be cast away is *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, the illusion of an enduring ego-principle.

The doctrine of non-self (*anattā*) is a cardinal tenet of Buddhism and the one that distinguishes it from all other religious systems, including Hindu Yoga. Ever since the time of Aristotle, the "soul," the *pneuma* (πνεῦμα) or *animus* that is supposed to enter the body at birth and permeate its substance, has been taken as the entelechy of being in Western thought; but Buddhism denies the existence of any such entity. Modern psychology and scientific philosophy confirm this view.[1074] Everything we know concerning states of consciousness can be postulated without reference to any persisting ego-principle. Like the body, the mind is a succession of states, a causally-conditioned continuum whose factors are feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), mental formations

[1074] See, for example, Bruce Hood, *The Self Illusion: How the Social Brain Creates Identity* (Oxford and New York, NY: Oxford University Press [2012]) and Sam Harris, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality without Religion* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster [2014]), especially chapters 2 and 3.

(*saṁkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Introspective examination of the states of the mind in order to realize this truth is one of the exercises recommended in Buddhism.

The understanding of the Buddhist principles of impermanence (*anicca*), of suffering (*dukkha*) (as being the product of craving), and non-ego (*anattā*) brings about a re-orientation of mind that is characterized by greater detachment, psychological stability, and moral awareness. But Buddhism points out that this is not an effect that can be obtained by external means; it is the result of effort, beginning with and sustained by the exercise of will. There must, first of all, be the desire to put an end to suffering, and that desire must be properly channeled into *sammappadhāna*, the Four Great Exertions; that is, the effort to put forth the energy, to prod the mind, and to struggle:

1. To prevent unarisen unwholesome mental states from arising;
2. To abandon unwholesome mental states that have already arisen;
3. To develop wholesome mental states that have not yet arisen;
4. To maintain and perfect wholesome mental states that have already arisen.

The unwholesome states of mind are nothing but products of mental illness that derive from the ego and its repressed desires.

Here, it should be pointed out that Buddhist teaching is non-violent, and this non-violence is to be exercised towards one's own mind as well as towards the external world. To repress natural desires is merely to force them below the surface of consciousness, where they are liable to grow into morbid obsessions, breaking out in hysteria or manic depressive symptoms. Buddhism does not favor this rough treatment of the psyche, which has produced too many undesirable results in Western monasticism. Instead of repression, it works by attenuation and sublimation. Visualizing the passions as fire, Buddhism seeks to extinguish them by withholding the fuel. For example, sensuality is reduced in stages by contemplation of the displeasing aspects of the body, so that there comes a turning away from the sources of physical passion. Attraction is replaced by repulsion, and this finally gives way to a state of calm detachment. Each impure state of mind is counteracted by its opposite.

Techniques of meditation (*bhāvanā*) in Buddhism are designed for specific ends, according to the personality of the meditator and the traits it is necessary to eliminate. They are prescribed by the teacher just as treatment is given by a psychiatrist; the mode of treatment is selected with the individual requirements of the patient in view. The forty subjects of meditation, known as *kammaṭṭhāna* (bases of action), cover every type of psychological need and every possible combination of types. Their salutary action is cumulative and progressive, from the first stages to the ultimate achievement. From the beginning, the Buddhist system of self-training makes a radical readjustment within the mental processes, a readjustment that is founded on the acceptance of certain essential concepts, which differ from those ordinarily held. The old scale of values, with its emphasis on the cultivation of desires, is seen to be false and a source of unhappiness; but this realization does not result in a psychic vacuum. As the old, unwholesome ideas are discarded, new and invigorating ones take their place, while the lower motivations give

place to consciously-directed impulses on the higher levels of being. So, the personality is molded anew by introspective self-knowledge.

One defect of psychoanalysis as it is practiced in the West is that it often reveals ugly aspects of the personality before the patient is ready to accept them. This sometimes has highly undesirable consequences and may even cause the disintegration of the personality. The Buddhist system of mental analysis teaches us to confront every revealed motivation in a spirit of detached and objective contemplation in the knowledge that there is nothing "unnatural" in nature, but that an impulse that is "natural" is not necessarily also desirable. The Buddhist who has brought himself to think in terms of the kinship of all living organisms, a concept inherent in the doctrine of rebirth, is not appalled by the coming to light of subconscious desires that are contrary to those permitted in his particular social environment. The distinction between human and animal conduct, which science has done much to prove illusory,[1075] is not sharply defined in Buddhist thought, where all life is seen as the product of craving-impulses manifesting now on the human, now on the animal level. Where sadistic or masochistic impulses exist, they are viewed realistically and with detachment as residual factors of past motivation, and they can be dealt with accordingly. Terms such as "perversion," which are already obsolete in modern psychology, although they survive in popular writing and speech, have never existed in Buddhist thought. All Buddhism recognizes is craving and its various objects and degrees. Because of this, the moral climate of Buddhist thought, as it concerns the libidinal impulses and inclinations, is different from that of the West with its Judeo-Christian discriminations. The distinction that this craving is "good," while another is "bad," is foreign to Buddhism, for Buddhism is not concerned with the morality of fluctuating social conventions[1076] but with a concept of mental hygiene in

[1075] Cf., for example, Frans de Waal, *Our Inner Ape* (New York, NY: Riverhead Books [2005]); Edward O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press [1978]); and Bruce Bagemihl, *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press [1999]).

[1076] By "fluctuating social conventions" is meant the local and temporary standards that change from time to time and that give way to others as modes of thought change. It does not refer to certain fundamental rules that are found to be identical all over the world and that provide the foundations on which society rests by enabling people to live together in communities to their mutual advantage. Morality is not, for instance, a matter of clothing. The clothing that is suitable for one climate, period, or society may be considered indecent in another — it is entirely a matter of custom, not in any way involving moral considerations, yet, the artificialities of convention are continually being confused with principles that are valid and unchanging. It is strange that such importance is attached to them when history shows that it is possible for a complete transformation in ideas to take place within so brief a period as one generation. Michelangelo depicted many of the characters, both angelic and human, in his Sistine Chapel frescoes completely nude. A subsequent Pope, outraged by their appearance, desecrated the artist's work by commissioning an inferior painter to add loincloths to the male figures. Marriage customs equally have little bearing on essential morality. In a polygamous society, to have only one wife might quite reasonably be thought an outrage against the customs of one's fellows and, therefore, "immoral." In Tibet, a girl who has had a child before marriage, instead of being disgraced and humiliated and properly ashamed of herself, as she would be expected to be in Western society, is highly honored and sought after in marriage because she has proved herself fertile. In many parts of feudal Europe, it was, at one time, the custom for a newly-wed girl to spend the first night after her marriage with the lord of the manor. Such customs are now considered barbarous, but, at one time, they represented the norm. Marriage between brother and sister was

which *all* craving is seen as a source of misery, to be first controlled and then eradicated. Thus, although its ultimate ideals are higher, the rational morality of Buddhism, as it still operates in many Buddhist communities, is not so destructive in its effects as the discriminative theological morality prevailing in the West. No Buddhist feels himself to be a "lost soul" or an outcast from society because his objects of desire are different from those of the majority, unless his ideas have been tainted by Judeo-Christian influences. The Western psychiatrist who seeks to reassure a patient of this type whom he cannot "cure," suffers from the disadvantage that he has the whole body of theological popular morality against him, and nothing can remove this devastating knowledge from his patient's mind. Hence, we find that guilt and inferiority complexes, a dangerous source of psychological maladjustment, are certainly more prevalent, coming from this particular cause, than they are where standards based upon Buddhist morality survive.

The three unwholesome roots of conduct — greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*) — are nourished by unhealthy thoughts that arise spontaneously, in association with memories of past experiences. But the mind also absorbs a great deal of poison from its environment. Through the channels of sense-perception, there is continual exposure to suggestions from the outside world. This, together with the natural desire to conform to the behavior patterns and ways of thinking that are characteristic of one's particular generation or society, brings an almost compulsive pressure to bear upon the individual. The norms of primitive societies are directed towards conformity with the laws of the tribe, enforcing respect for taboo and intertribal relations; but, in the complex civilizations of today, disruptive influences that deny or at least weaken the traditional patterns of behavior, often even bringing them into contempt, are gathering force and

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the rule for the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt, and the records of antiquity provide other instances of incestuous relationships that carried with them no particular moral condemnation. Among the warriors of Sparta and the ancient Samurai caste of Japan, homosexual relationships, which are severely punished by law in several contemporary Western societies as well as in those countries where Islam is the predominant religion, were not only permitted but actually encouraged, the reason being that heterosexual relationships were thought to have the effect of softening and effeminizing the martial nature. It is abundantly clear, therefore, that such local and temporary fashions in behavior are governed by expediency and current beliefs; they represent the standard of conduct that is thought best for the welfare of a particular community at a particular time. Depending on circumstances and conditions, they are liable to change. Communities that are mainly pastoral and agricultural, or nomadic, as in the case of the desert tribes of Arabia, tend to be polygamous, and any change in their customs is usually traceable to a change in their economic conditions or mode of livelihood. In the same way, the sexual customs of the Spartans, quite apart from religious prejudices, are frowned upon in a society that wishes, as most national groups at present do, to increase its population.

It is the mistake of most systems of morality based upon religion to place too much emphasis on the non-essentials, with the result that, in frequent phases of reaction against an artificial morality, the really important rules are thrown aside as well. Under Christianity, for example, the very word "morality" has come to mean almost exclusively *sexual* behavior, so that it may be said of a man who is a thief, liar, and swindler that, despite his failings, he can be a very moral man — meaning that he is faithful to the one wife the law allows him! The danger here lies in the fact that thoughtful people who are intelligent enough to realize that these rules are artificial and not based on any transcendental, universally-valid principles, are liable to fall into the error of thinking the same about all ethical laws. This is not to say that sexual rules of conduct have no importance; they have, but not to the exclusion, or near exclusion, of everything else.

momentum. An increasing part is being played in this process by the media and mass entertainment.

It would be well if more attention were to be paid by present-day moralists to the cult of violence that has arisen as the outcome of commercially-exploited brutality and sadism in films, on television, in popular music and literature, in video games, and most of the curiously misnamed "comics," which give children and adolescents a morbid taste for the torture and extermination of their fellow-beings. Aggression is another instinct found in man, but to encourage it for profit is certainly one of the true sins against humanity. Here again, of course, we have nothing that is entirely new; cruelty is a prominent feature of many traditional and classic stories for children. What is new is the enormous quantity of such entertainment and the facility with which it is distributed on a global scale to create an international climate of thought and subconscious reversal of all standards that civilization normally upholds. We should not feel surprised at the psychological dichotomy it produces. Sooner or later, we shall have to pay heavily for the cult of violence we have encouraged.

This, however, is a question of social psychology; we are now dealing with individual psychology as it is affected by modern conditions and, in the light of the Buddhist axiom, *sabbe puthujjanā ummattakā* "all worldlings are deluded." We have already noted that the four stages of mental purification beyond the *puthujjana* state begin with the attainment of *sotāpatti magga*, the "path" of one who has "entered the stream" of emancipation. This is followed immediately by *sotāpatti phala*, the "fruit of stream winning." It is at this point that the former *puthujjana* becomes one of the four (or eight) classes of Noble Personalities. In the scheme of ten *saṁyojanas*, he has eliminated the first three fetters: (1) ego-delusion; (2) doubt about the truth; and (3) attachment to rites and rituals, which have no place in the higher endeavor. He then goes on to the next stage, that of *Sakadāgāmī*. This is marked by the weakening of the next two fetters in the series: (4) sensuous passion and (5) ill will. In the next phase of development, *Anāgāmī*, he completely frees himself from the first five, which are called the "lower fetters." The remaining five fetters are: (6) attachment to existence on the higher levels of being (intellectualized existence); (7) attachment to existence on the purely mental plane (the spiritual life freed from the body); (8) pride (the "pride of the saint in his sainthood"); (9) restlessness (the perturbed condition of the mind distracted by desires); and (10) ignorance (*avijjā*). The last of these is the root-condition referred to previously; it is only eliminated in full at the last stage. The aspirant has then gained the full mental liberation of an *Arahant*. While the mental and bodily formations continue to function, an *Arahant* experiences *sopādisesa nibbāna*, or *nibbāna* with the elements of existence (*upādi*)[1077] still present. At death, this becomes *anupādisesa nibbāna*, or *parinibbāna*, the complete extinction of the life-asserting, life-sustaining factors. No form of *nibbāna* can be attained before this last stage; the three classes of Noble Personalities that precede it gain

[1077] The meaning of *upādi* is "that to which one grasps, that to which one clings," that is, the five aggregates (*khandha*) of existence. Cf. Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines* (4th revised edition; Kandy, Śri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society [1980]), p. 216.

assurance of the reality of *nibbāna*, but they do not experience the actual *sopādisesa nibbāna* until all the defilements are removed.

It is not the purpose of this Appendix to deal with the state of *nibbāna*,[1078] but merely to indicate the difference between the condition of the "worldling," with his illusions and cravings, and that of the fully-emancipated and mentally healthy being. Buddhism, itself, is concerned more with the path than with the end, since it is the path that must be followed, and the end must automatically reveal itself if the path is followed correctly. It is true that the goal, *nibbāna*, is never very far from Buddhist thought; it is the motivating principle and *raison d'être* of the entire Buddhist system. But the stages on the way are our immediate concern. They involve an approach that is fundamentally therapeutic and progressive. Buddhist meditation is of two types, complementary to each other: *samatha-bhāvanā*, the cultivation of tranquility, and *vipassanā-bhāvanā*, the cultivation of direct transcendental insight. For the latter, it is necessary to have a teacher, one who has himself taken the full course of treatment; but much benefit can be obtained by an intelligent application of Buddhist ideas in the preliminary stages without a guide other than the original Teachings of the *Buddha*. Everyone can, and should, avoid what he knows to be unwholesome states of mind; should cultivate universal benevolence (*mettā*) in the systematic Buddhist manner; should endeavor to impress on his deeper consciousness the truths of impermanence, suffering and its cause, and the unreality of the ego. A period of quiet meditation, in which the mind is withdrawn from externals, should be set aside every day for this purpose. By this method, Buddhism enables every man to be his own psychiatrist, and he avoids those dependencies on others that so often produce further emotional entanglements in the relationship between the psychotherapist and his patient.

Any philosophy of life that does not include rebirth is incomplete and morally unsatisfactory, and the same is true of psychological systems.[1079] Some psychological disorders have their origin in past lives: they are often congenital and sometimes involve the physical structure of the brain and neural system. These are the psychosomatic conditions that call for the use of surgery, drugs, and other physical treatments. As resultants of past *kamma*, they may respond to treatment or they may not; it all depends upon the balance of good and bad *kamma* and the interaction of causes, not excluding external and material ones. But, in any case, the knowledge that no condition is permanent and the certainty that the disorder will come to an end with the exhaustion of the bad *kamma*-result, be it in this life or another, gives courage and fortitude to the sufferer. By understanding our condition, we are able to master it, or at least to endure it until it passes away. This salutary understanding can also be applied beneficially in the

[1078] See Chapter 36 for information about *nibbāna*.

[1079] This same requirement is acknowledged by Stanislav Grof, formerly Chief of Psychiatric Research at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center and Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, in his book *The Adventure of Self-Discovery: Dimensions of Consciousness and New Perspectives in Psychotherapy and Inner Exploration* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press [1988]), as well as in subsequent works. See also Martin Wilson, *Rebirth and the Western Buddhist* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications [1987]).

case of those who have developed personality disorders through bad environmental influences, childhood traumas, or any other cause traceable in this present life. Feelings of inadequacy, grievances against the family or social framework, and emotional maladjustments can all be understood in terms of *kamma* and rebirth. The question "why has this thing happened to me?," with the sense of injustice that comes from experiencing undeserved pain, is answered fully and logically by Buddhism. With that comes the beginning of an adjustment to circumstances, which is, in itself, therapeutic. Together with this, the knowledge that one can be the sole and undisputed master of one's own future fate comes as the most effective psychological tonic and corrective that can be administered. ■

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